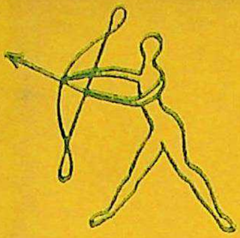
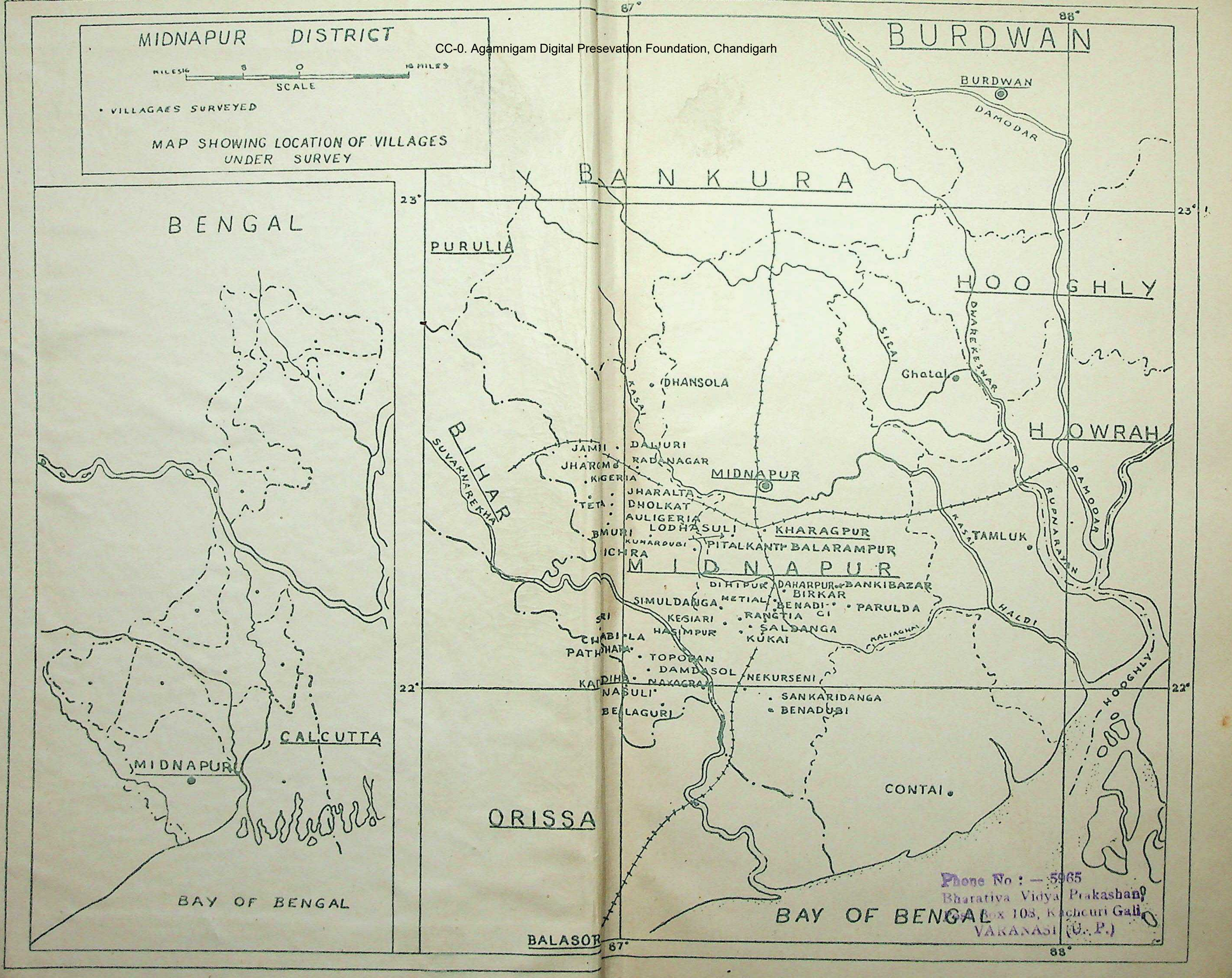


THE LODHAS OF WEST BENGAL

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY

P. K. BHOWMICK


MIDNAPUR DISTRICT
MILES 16 8 0 16 MILES
SCALE
• VILLAGAES SURVEYED
MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF VILLAGES UNDER SURVEY
BENGAL
CALCUTTA
MIDNAPUR
BAY OF BENGAL
87°
88°
23°
22°
BURDWAN
BURDWAN
DAMODAR
BANKURA
PURULIA
HOOGHLY
HOWRAH
BIHAR
SUVARNAREKHA
KASAI
SILAI
DWAREKESWAR
Ghatal
RUPNARAYAN
DAMODAR
DHANSOLA
JAMBI
DALURI
RADHANAGAR
JHAROM
KIGERIA
MIDNAPUR
JHARALTA
TETA
DHOLKAT
AULIGERIA
LODHASULI
KHARAGPUR
BMURI
KUMARDUBI
PITALKANTH
BALARAMPUR
ICHRA
TAMLUK
KASAI
MIDNAPUR
DIHIPUR
DAHARPUR
BANKIBAZAR
BIRKAR
SIMULDANGA
METIAL
BENADI
PARULDA
SRI
KESIARI
RANGTIA
CI
CHABILA
HASIMPUR
SALDANGA
PATHARA
KUKAI
KALIAGHAI
HALDI
TOPODAN
DAMDASOL
NEKURSENI
KADIHA
NASULI
NAYAGRAM
SANKARIDANGA
BENADUBI
BELAGURI
HOOGHLY
CONTAI
ORISSA
BAY OF BENGAL
BALASOR

Phone No : — 5965
Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan,
Post Box 108, Kachouri Gali,
VARANASI (U. P.)

THE LODHAS OF WEST BENGAL

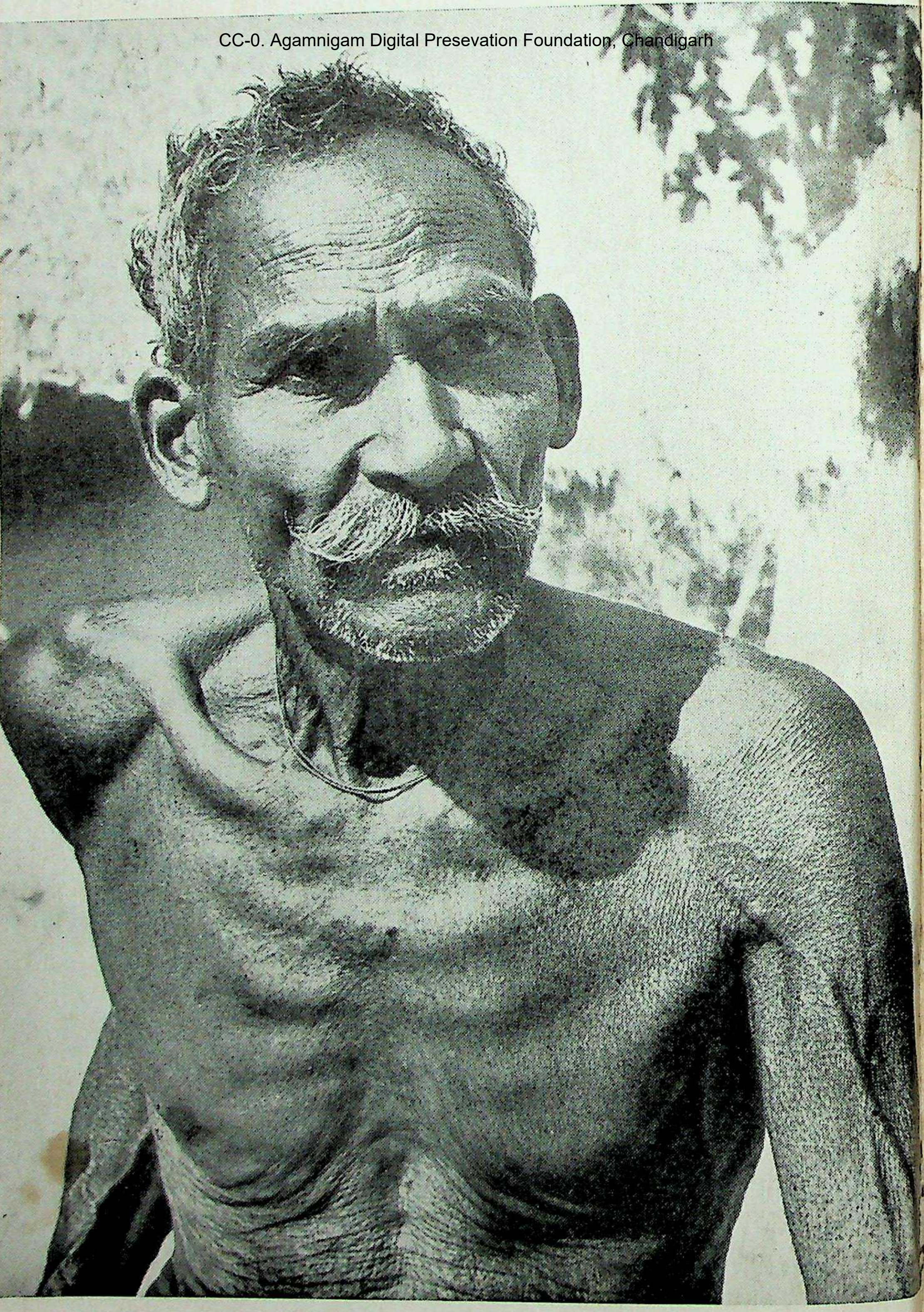


Plate No 2 : A grey haired with wrinkled Skins—with living memory of the Past.

THE LODHAS OF WEST BENGAL

A Socio-Economic Study

By

Dr. P. K. BHOWMICK
Department of Anthropology
Calcutta University

With a Foreword by

N. K. BOSE, F.N.I.
Director, Anthropological Survey of India

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TO MY
FATHER AND MOTHER

FOREWORD

In many respects Dr. P. K. Bhowmick's account of the Lodha is of great value to anthropologists. The Lodha at one time seemed to have belonged to the Mundari group. Even now one occasionally comes across a song sung by very old men in a broken Mundari language. But their assimilation into the Hindu fold of Midnapur must have occurred centuries ago, so that they are indistinguishable, at least in language, from their neighbours. But they have retained some elements of culture which are undoubtedly survivals from the past.

The Lodha must have loved the freedom of the jungles which abounded at one time in Midnapur. But the jungle could not by itself support their number. They developed certain economic relationships with their neighbours ; and it is unfortunate that a wrong turn took place in this adjustment, so that they became branded as a criminal tribe. The evident cause was poverty and social neglect. There can be nothing in the original culture to which they belonged which would have led them into this unhappy condition.

It is fortunate, however, that the Act with regard to the criminal tribes was repealed and the Lodha, at least in law, have become equal with every other citizen of India. Dr. Bhowmick has worked among them not only as an anthropologist looking for scientific information, but also as a social worker intensely interested in the upliftment of the tribe through education and economic rehabilitation. But this is a social process which is beyond the capacity of one or even a dozen workers.

Dr. Bhowmick has worked hard in order to rehabilitate the tribe psychologically in the hearts of their more advanced neighbours. He has tried to clear misunderstandings, correct

harmful attitudes, so that the neighbouring communities would be able to treat the Lodha as an equal in the adventure of rebuilding a new India.

In the course of this almost missionary activity, Dr. Bhowmick has been able to penetrate and observe the workings of Lodha society at its closest range. Although his work is mainly an ethnographical account, a social anthropologist will observe how he has tried to present a picture of the interlacing of different aspects of the culture of the Lodha community. Religion, family organization, village life, leadership, all these are interrelated with one another. One would have felt happier if he were free to develop this aspect of his study a little more fully. But probably that would have added further to the bulk of the volume. The elements are already present ; and a discriminating anthropologist will be able to observe these interrelationships if he reads carefully between the lines.

Indian Museum,
Calcutta
27 July 1963

N. K. Bose,
Director,
Anthropological Survey of India

INTRODUCTION

This book is a descriptive ethnographic account of the Lodhas as they are at present. The Lodhas were formerly designated as a Criminal Tribe and persecuted and looked down upon with suspicion and aversion by their neighbours. But, in fact, no correct information could be had about them excepting from Police Records.

In the present century, we find a new outlook has developed in matters relating to tribal societies. Some of the so-called primitive people have undergone profound changes in the patterns of their livelihoood and culture. In the present account some characteristic features of the Lodhas have been depicted. This will help readers to get an idea about their incorporation in Hindu society and their inter-relation with their neighbours.

This is not all. There was another important object kept in view by the author during field work. This was the betterment of this down-trodden community and finding adequate means for fitting them into the general social fabric, so that they could share in its progressive life.

After attainment of independence, a progressive outlook has been taken by the Government in this respect, and plans are being formulated and implemented, by stages, for the uplift of the primitive tribals of our country who form a sizeable bulk of our population. Systematic investigation made about the socio-economic condition of the Lodhas, to focus their problems, and participation in the work of their uplift by the writer, have brought some basic changes in the approach and outlook of the administrators, as well as of the neighbouring communities. Through such efforts, new inter-communal relationships have been established, which have already helped the process of integration.

The writer undertook an extensive field-survey in 1952, in 31 Lodha villages, selected at random. The Lodhas of Midnapur with their specific problem are regarded as a representative group. Hence the writer confined himself in studying the Lodhas of Midnapur only. Next year, he spent most of his time in Lodha villages, in collecting materials for the monograph as well in organising social uplift work, among not only the Lodhas, but also among other communities living there. He visited almost all the Lodha villages in the district of Midnapur to which the writer himself belongs.

The writer has attended a large number of festivals and social gatherings, to observe their special features. In course of investigation, he had also to mediate and settle, on personal requests by the Lodhas, some of their long-standing social and property disputes, as well as of the other communities, which they had with the other caste groups of the neighbourhood. During the field investigation, he had to live among them, sharing food and shelter with them.

Besides these, the writer is associated with many development programmes of the Lodhas, as well as other communities, in many parts of the district, Thus he has constant and intimate relations with the people of the area.

The idea of making a field investigation amongst the Lodhas, was first infused in the mind of the writer by Prof. T. C. Das of the University of Calcutta and later, stimulated by Dr. M. N. Basu, Head of the Department of Anthropology of University of Calcutta, who personally helped him in many ways, and even went together for the site of fieldwork, at the time of investigation. Then Prof. N. K. Bose, Director, Anthropological Survey of India, directed and guided him in the preparation of this monograph. He also very kindly visited many Lodha villages, along with the writer, helped the writer in processing data for the publication, and gave valuable advice on the implementation of the upliftment programmes.

Dr. S. S. Sarkar of the Dept. of Anthropology, Calcutta University, also visited a few Lodha villages and helped the writer in the work of anthropometry, and in the preparation of a paper on the physical affinity of this tribe. The writer is deeply indebted and grateful to these esteemed Professors for their kind suggestions. It is to be noted here that all the shortcomings and defects in this volume, if any, are entirely due to the deficiency of the writer himself, of which he is fully conscious.

He is also deeply grateful to Prof. C. von Fürer Haimendorf of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and Prof. Milton Singer of the Chicago University, U. S. A., who kindly offered valuable suggestions when the writer met them in Calcutta during their visit, in connection with the preparation of this volume.

He is further indebted to Sri R. K. Gupta, D. I. G. (Arms and Border), who kindly helped him in the collection of data on crimes and criminals, and made valuable suggestions regarding the preparation of this chapter. Besides this, through his personal favour and sympathy, the writer could arrange for redress of many disabilities and local difficulties suffered by the Lodhas.

He also received sympathetic encouragement in this research work from Principal P. K. Bose, Prof. S. B. Ghosh, Vice-Principal, Prof. S. Mitra, Head of the Department of Anthropology, and his other colleagues of Bangabasi College Calcutta.

His thanks also go to Sri R. R. Bhattacharyya, Additional District Magistrate, Midnapur, Sri D. Majumdar, Director, Sri A. C. Banerjee, Asst. Secretary, Sri S. K. Sengupta. Asst. Director, and Sri B. Mukherjee, Liaison Officer, Sri A. K. Biswas, Special Officer, of the Tribal Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal, and Sri N. Dutta, B.D.O. Narayangarh, and Sri H. L. Sengupta, B.D.O. Binpur, for their sympathy and valuable suggestions, in respect of various upliftment programmes sponsored for the Lodhas in this district.

The writer is also indebted to Sri Sibapada Roy, Jhargram, Sri Pravas Chandra Midya of Kukai, Sri Haladhar Mahato of Nayagram, and social workers like Sri Benimadhab Bhattacharyya and Sri Sudhir Kumar Bhakta who is a Lodha himself, and others, for the co-operation in translating the ideas of the writer into practice in many parts of Midnapur.

The writer is also grateful to all his Lodha informants who, not only sincerely accorded him their hospitality, but also gave honest and correct information. Indeed this volume is nothing but a scientific and systematic collation of personal experiences and observations of the Lodhas covering a long period, backed by scientific data, as were revealed by such investigation.

His thanks are also due to Sri Hrishi Kesh Mukherjee of Uttarpara, and Sri Profulla Kumar Mitra, who went through the proofs.

He owes a special debt of gratitude to Sri A. C. Banerjee, M.A., W.B.C.S. of Tribal Welfare Department, who prepared the index, and Sri J. C. Sengupta, M.Sc., I.A.S., Superintendent of Census Operations, for the assessment of Lodha population in 1961 census. In the present census of 1961 there is no separate enumeration of the tribe. 'Kheria (Kharia)', another aboriginal derivative, who mainly live in Mayurbhanj District of Orissa, some of them live in Midnapur, Purulia and Bankura Districts of West Bengal have also been enumerated in the same group namely 'Lodha-Kheria' combined in a group, in spite of their distinctive cultural patterns. This may lead the readers, in general, as well as those carrying on research work, to confusion. The reasons for inclusion of these people into one group have not been given by the authorities concerned.

Sri Sankar Bhattacharyya of Punthi Pustak deserves special thanks for his undertaking to print the manuscript in book form.

The book has been dedicated to the parents of the writer, from whom he has got special inspiration, and the feeling of love and affection for the down-trodden and the untouchable communities.

15th August, 1963.
727, Lake Town,
Patipukur,
Calcutta-28.

P. K. Bhowmick

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The following is a socio-economic study of the Lodhas, the so-called ex-criminal tribe of West Bengal by P. K. Bhowmick. It is none the less a fine expression of the situations in which their customs and behaviour, religion and thought are conditioned. The author belongs to the school of anthropologists of younger generation. He undertook this field investigation risking his own life amongst this suspicious community.

This dissertation is a careful and through close-up of the life and activity of the Lodhas, a denotified community, based on field investigation and observation for several years' a product of an intimate vision of social actualities, and a study of scientific method and the mind of the anthropologist himself.

The book is of immense value to a student, who desires to study a community in a better and scientific method, to assimilate the data supplied toward synthetic inferences. It will as well be a great source of information for missionaries, doctors, administrators, politicians, social reformers and those connected with the tribal welfare work sponsored by the Government for it describes with exactitude and minuteness every aspect of the life of the community.

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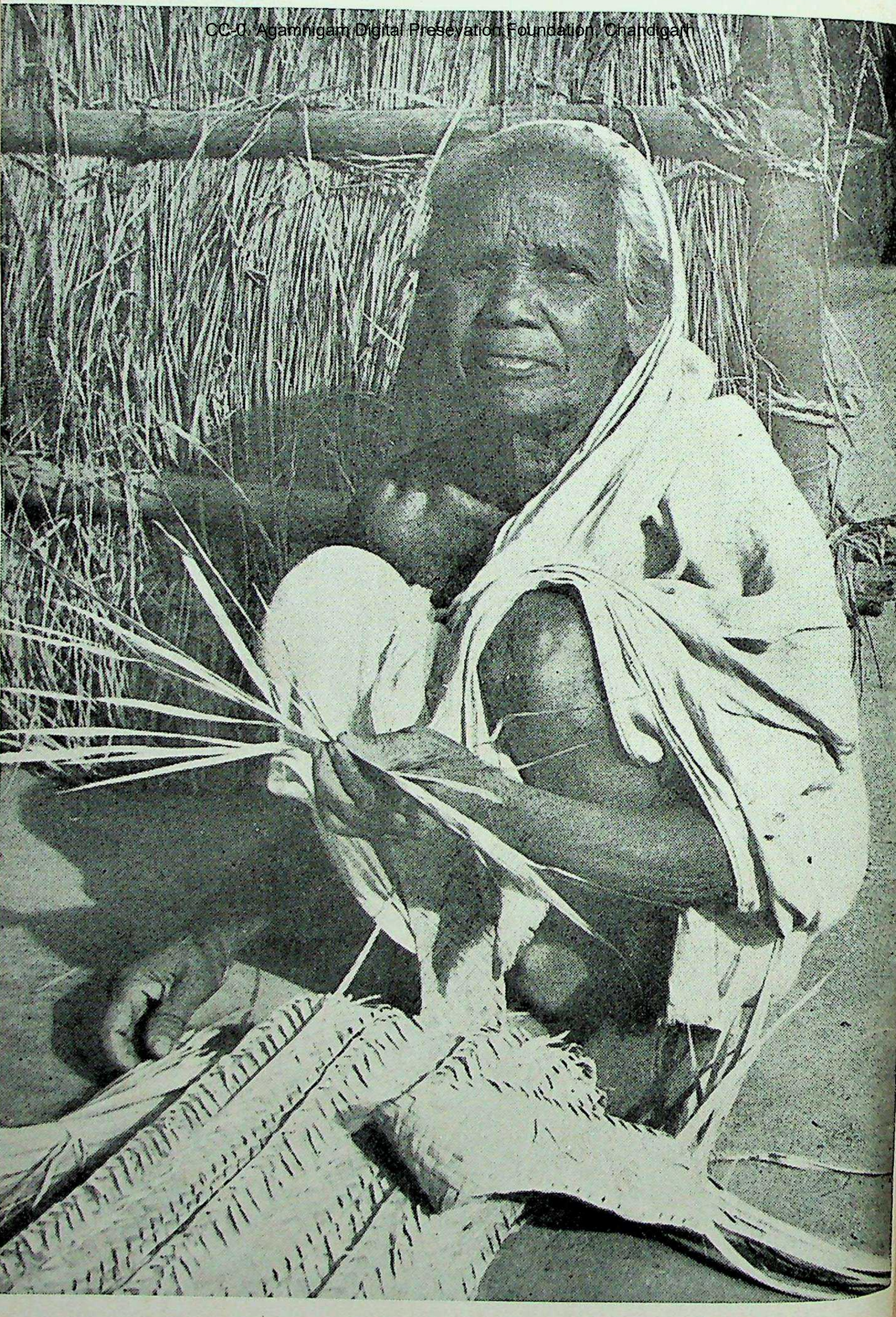

Plate No 1 : Lodha woman matting in leisure.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND

The Lodhas of West Bengal who number about 8000, live scattered in the western jungle-covered tracts of Midnapur. They were designated as one of the 'criminal tribes' till the revocation of the practice by the Criminal Tribes Act of 1952.

This monograph is a socio-economic study of these people. Attempts have been made in the first place to describe the different cultural patterns of the Lodhas, and the various causes which have led to them. Their ways of life, social customs, ideas and aspirations are still subject to rapid change. It has been our purpose also to note these changes, and try to find out their causes.

The frequency of crimes in Lodha society presents a real problem. An analysis of the cultural life of these people points to various maladjustments which are probably responsible for criminal propensity.

Criminality is not hereditary, and the criminal propensity of the Lodhas is more due to the disintegration of their social moorings under economic and territorial displacements from time to time. The most important cause of their criminality is the loss of their traditional means of livelihood. Formerly they depended upon forests for their living. But the forests were fast denuded by landholders and the Government for agriculture and for establishing new villages. The Lodhas did not, however, like to be nor were they rehabilitated to the changed order of life. They had to migrate from place to place for their bare living from time to time. This economic and territorial displacement under a new setting affected very seriously their old patterns of economic life and upset the equilibrium of the whole society. This has led to maladjusted condition which still persists. So an account of their socio-economic condition is of great importance to anthropologists, sociologists as well as administrators.

Geographical Setting

The district of Midnapur lies in the Burdwan Division in West Bengal. It is the southernmost district of the State and is situated between 21° 36′ and 22° 57′ north latitude and between 86° 33′ and 88° 11′ east longitude. It is the largest and the most populous district in West Bengal. It has an area of 5,258.5 Sq. miles according to the Surveyor General of India and 5,253 Sq. miles according to the Director of Land Records and Surveys, West Bengal. It has a population of 3,3,59,022 as recorded in the Census Report of 1951.

On the north, Midnapur is bounded by Bankura district, on the east by the river Hooghly and its tributary and the Rupnarayan river separating it from the three districts of 24-Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly. Its southern boundary is the coastline of the Bay of Bengal, while its western boundary is coterminous with Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts of Orissa and Singhbhum and Manbhum districts of Behar. The present boundary is more or less static since 1872.

The district may be physically divided into two parts—one, the western jungle covered hilly area linked up with that of Orissa and Chhotanagpur plateau and the other, a more or less plain alluvial land, spread up to the river Hooghly and stretching further down upto the coast of the Bay of Bengal. The physical features of the two parts are strikingly different. The spur in the extreme northwest consists of a tangled mass of hillocks and narrow intervening valleys. The slopes are scattered, with cultivation in terraced patches of land where various crops and vegetables are grown. This portion of the soil has lateritic characteristics. Sporadic examples of granitic outcrops are visible in this part. The alluvial portion has a gradual slope from north to south intersected by the rivers Rupnarayan, Haldi, Rasulpur, Kasai and Kaliaghai. The southern and the extreme easternmost border is a shallow plain in the coast of the Bay of Bengal, which is laid waste by floods occasionally.

The weastern lateriferous undulating tracts bear a flora closely resembling those of Chhotanagpur. A major part of this tract is covered by forests of *sāl* (Shorea robusta), *piāsāl* (Pterocarpus marsupium), *mahuā* (Madhuka latifolia), Terminalia, Silk Cotton, Mango, Jack-fruit and similar trees, all growing wild. Their bright white and scarlet blossoms present a picturesque sight in the beginning of each summer. In the eastern area, abundant crops like paddy, oil-seeds and vegetables grow during different months of the year. Timber and fuel are the two chief cash-earning commodities for the inhabitants of the jungle areas. The western jungle tracts are infested with a large variety of carnivora like the tigers, leopards, wolves, bears, etc. Many varieties of snakes, fishes and birds are also found all over the district.

The climate of the district is more or less salubrious, though the western part remains under a spell of dry weather during summer. The south-western monsoon causes plenty of rainfall in the eastern part of this district. The mean temperature is about 80° C. in December, rising to 85° C. in February, 94° C. in March and 102° C. in April and May. Thereafter, there is a steady fall in temperature till monsoon sets in. During the cold weather there is very little rainfall while before the monsoon, it gradually increases with occasional tempests.

The South-Eastern Railway (formerly B.N.R.) cuts across this district through the central, southern and western parts. In the central sector, Khargpur is the most important town and the largest railway junction. The Howrah-Puri line runs through the southernmost part and Howrah-Bombay line through the western part of this district. There is a network of metalled roads linking almost all the important parts of the district. A temporary aerodrome has been constructed at Kalaikunda (near Khargpur). All important towns of the district are interconnected by motorable roads. Besides, bullock carts serve the hilly and inaccessible western part, and boats and canoes are by far the most popular means of communication in the eastern part, which is criss-crossed by innumerable canals and rivers.

History and Population

The history of Midnapur can be traced back to the Mauryan period (321-297 B. C.). A few crude *coup de poings* and polished stone celts have been discovered in the western part of this district during excavations pointing to the possibility of existence of a pre-historic culture.

Politically, Midnapur occupies an important position. One of the main roads from the Ganges-plain in the north to the eastern coastal plain of the Peninsula runs through Midnapur. Therefore, raids and migratory movements have always been a feature of the history of this district. Tamralipti or Tamluk was an ancient port, and there runs a tradition that Emperor Asoka himself erected a *Stupa* here. Within the last two years the neighbourhood of Tamluk has yielded a series of very important terracotta and other figurines[1], which bear evidence of Buddhist, Roman and other influences, some of which may go back to much earlier times.

The East India Company took over this part of Bengal from Nawab Mir Kasim Ali by a treaty in 1760. In the earliest phase of British occupation the most persistent disturbers of peace in this place were, however, the Paiks, Layeks or Chuars. The term 'Paik' or 'Chuar' means an outlandish fellow in the local dialect. In Midnapur the wild tribes who served as native soldiers of the local Zemindars in the bold stand to thwart the aggression by the British to occupy this part of Bengal are generally known by this name. For a pretty long time these people held back the British by sporadic surprise raids and plunders (1761-1816). But their activities were eventually suppressed by the British who extended the limits of their territorial occupation to this part of Bengal. They posted their own troops to guard against any future rising by the land-holding class and the Paiks who were vested with 'Paikan Lands' (rent-free land) for serving in the private militia of the local zemindars, had this privilege forfeited by the British.

---

[1] Preserved in the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta University.

It would be evident from the above facts that this area had hardly known any peace for centuries together and as a consequence, the tribal people who inhabited this region were always in a disturbed condition. This has affected the life of the Lodhas considerably as we shall presently see.

The total population of the district of Midnapur is 3,3,59,022 and its density is 693 per Sq. mile, the average concentration being 597 per Sq. mile in the rural areas and 5,109 per Sq. mile in the urban areas. The tribal population number 2,12,525 in which the Santals, Oraons, Mundas are all included. The Scheduled Caste population is 4,82,793 of which the Lodhas number 6,040 only according to 1951 Census. Later, by a Notification in September, 1957 the Lodhas have been declared as the Scheduled Tribe of West Bengal on the basis of the recommendations of the Backward Classes Commission The Lodhas are also distributed in some other parts of West Bengal. The figures of distribution of these people available from the Census Reports are given in the Table 1.

The remarkable decrease in the number of the Lodhas in 1951 is explained by the Census Superindendent as due to their reluctance to register themselves as such, prefering to be called as '*Savaras*'. Again, during the great famine of 1943 a large number of these people died of starvation and disease in all parts of this district. So it may be said that this is another potent factor leading to the reduction in the number of the Lodhas in Midnapur.

TABLE 1

WEST BENGAL	1951	1941	1931	1921	1911	1901
Total	8,346	11,639	10,960	...	7,362	6,284
Burdwan	127	4	29	...	37	85
Birbhum	11	...	...	...	...	...
Bankura	23	8	...	...	...	...
Midnapur	6,040	10,374	9,820	...	6,329	4,629
Hooghly	2,067	1,163	963	...	907	1,533
Howrah	19	39	68	...	31	...
24-Parganas	30	35	27	...	17	2
Calcutta	23	10	50	...	15	34
Nadia	...	...	3	...	...	...
Murshidabad	4	...	...	...	...	...
Jalpaiguri	2	6	...	...	26	1

The details of the distribution of the Lodhas in Midnapur are not accurately known; but according to the survey conducted by the writer between 1952-1957, they seem to be as follows:—

TABLE 2

Subdivision	Police Station	No. of Lodhas
1. Midnapur Sadar Subdivision	(1) Narayangarh	2,100
	(2) Kesiari	1,600
	(3) Khargpur	400
	(4) Dantan	300
	(5) Sabang	100
		4,500
2. Jhargram Sub-division	(1) Jhargram	1,200
	(2) Binpur	200
	(3) Jamboni	300
	(4) Sankrail	300
	(5) Gopiballavpur	200
	(6) Nayagram	1,300
		3,500
	Grand Total	8,000

The spoken language of the district of Midnapur according to Grierson is an admixture of corrupt Oriya and corrupt Bengali. The western part of the district (tribal population) again has its own vocabulary 'Mundari' which is a distorted form of tribal language. The Lodhas speak a dialect composed of distorted Bengali, Oriya and words of Mundari origin. There are a few other communities who have settled in Khargpur, who speak Telegu, Hindi, Nepali and Urdu.

There are many castes and communities in this district like the Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians and other tribes. The Brahmans, the Kayasthas, the Mahishyas, the Vaidyas and the Sadgops are considered clean classes amongst the Hindus of whom the Mahishyas are numerically predominant. The Scheduled Castes are Paundra Kshatriyas, Namasudras, Bagdis, Doms, Bauris, Mals, etc. including a large number of tribal derivatives like the Bhumijas, the Koras, the Mahalis, the Bagals etc. The Mahatos are also treated as an educationally backward group. In west Midnapur the Mahatos are mainly agriculturists and an ambitious community. They are now trying to raise their social and economic status by increasingly availing of the facilities for education and changing over to more paying professions.

The outskirts of the western jungle-covered tract of Midnapur are inhabited by a few clean Hindu castes who acknowledge the supremacy of the Brahmans in their social and religious life. A number of Scheduled Castes and untouchables also live side by side with them. These people are not served by high caste Brahman priests. Some socially degraded or degenerated Brahmans or Vaishnava mendicants however, are now conducting their religious affairs and performing social ceremonies. The majority are of course the aboriginals or tribal people or their derivatives who have their own priests or religious officials to conduct all social and religious functions, The Lodhas generally live in an ethnic environment in which Santals, Mundas, Koras, Mahalis, and the Mahatos are numerically predominant, the next being a combination of a few caste Hindu groups like the Brahmans, the Mahishyas and the Sadgops.

Occupation and Society

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the general population except for a limited number of castes, like Brahmans or Kayasthas and Mahishyas who pursue other professions. Other smaller communities in the Hindu hierarchy have their traditional occupations as the *Nāpits* or barbers who, besides generally shaving the people, assist priests in the performance of social or religious rites; the *Goālās* or milkmen; the *Tāntis* or weavers; the *Kaivartas* or *Jalias* or fishermen; and a few others known by their professions, But the majority of this class of people do not follow their traditional callings now-a-days. They have changed over to some less exacting and more paying means of livelihood like working in an industrial establishment. Even so, agriculture or petty business is the first choice of the majority groups. This is a positive indication of the break of monopoly of hereditary professions.

In the jungle areas, the Santals, the Mundas, the Bhumijas and the Koras generally practise agriculture or serve as agricultural labour. The Mahalis have the traditional occupation of basket-making. The *Doms* or untouchables have the same trade of basket-making in addition to their being drummers who participate in all ceremonial occasions as such. Caste solidarity or cohesion was strictly maintained previously by the different groups and communities but now-a-days they have shed their orthodoxy in almost all parts of the district. This is a direct result of a change in their traditional callings or economic activities which have dissolved the barriers of caste or status under stress of social changes. Another contributory factor was the initiation of 'Swadeshi Movements' in the twenties of the present century to which the people responded most enthusiastically from one end of the district to the other, animated with the spirit of nationalism and the artificial social barriers between various castes and communities were narrowed down to an appreciable extent. This was achieved under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi during the Non-Cooperation Movement and the different programmes of social and economic upliftment adopted by him for the masses, especially for the Harijans or the untouchables. As the political organisations had been active and are still so throughout the district preaching abolition of caste barriers, their persistent endeavours have succeeded in dissolving some of the caste prejudices and have created a more compact and homogeneous society composed of various castes. The people hailed this change for the better and contributed their best towards the success of these movements.

Coins are the popular means of exchange throughout the district although barter of commodities is another media through which the people living in the villages procure their necessities. Among the agrarian communities surplus crops or other cash crops like jute, potato, etc. are sold by the farmers to those who work elsewhere as wage earners and have a means to buy the surplus produce. The Zemindars or the land-holding class of this area had previously their main source of income from the land and those who owned the jungles, sold their products or wood for money. There are a few traders and businessmen amongst the local people but in the major towns the traders are generally the Marwaris or the Beharis who have big Rice Mills or shops selling consumer goods. The role played by the Lodhas in the general economy of the district will be discussed elsewhere.

So far as the religious groupings in this region are concerned, the distribution is : —

Hindus 91.78%, Sikhs 0.09%. Muslims 7.17%, Christians 0.28%, Tribal population 0.62%. But Hinduism as prescribed in the Scriptures has greatly influenced the lives and religious beliefs of the different castes and communities. At the same time local religious faith has influenced the protagonists of Sanskritic Hinduism, thus suggesting an assimilation. This imparted a sort of dynamism to the entire religious structure which is forging ahead towards universal catholicism.

Earlier References to the Lodhas

The Lodhas generally inhabit the jungle tracts of west Midnapur and have spread out in small numbers in some of the contiguous districts like Hooghly (West Bengal), Mayurbhanj (Orissa) and Singbhum (Behar).

According to the Census of India 1901, 'They originally migrated from Central Provinces where an agricultural tribe named 'Lodh' or 'Nodh' or 'Ludhi' are found in large numbers even to-day. The District Magistrate reckoned that they may be allied to the *Savaras* mentioned by Risely, but in Mayurbhanj the *Savaras*, a considerably higher rank than the Lodhas, are entitled to the services of Brahmin priests, the washerman (*Dhobā*) and the barber (*Nāpit*) and allowed to serve water and wash the dinner plates of higher castes, which privileges are forbidden to the *Nodhs*......The *Chirmārs* of Midnapur town whose livelihood is the snaring of birds, are said to be an offshoot of this tribe.........Their traditional occupation is collection of jungle produce such as cocoons, lac, resin, honey, wax, etc. In Midnapur they allow polygamy......The marriage ceremony is performed by a man of the caste who is known as *Kotāl*......The bridegroom puts an iron bangle around the bride's wrist and smears her forehead with vermilion mark. This completes the ceremony. *Sitalā* is the chief deity of the Lodhas. They burn their dead and mourn for 19 days; on the 11th day they shave themselves and wash their clothes and present rice and small sums of money to an Acharya Brahman or a Vaishnava Mendicant'.

The *District Gazeteer of Midnapur* (1931) contains some interesting remarks about their criminal habits. It reads: 'Midnapur has long been notorious for the number of dacoities committed within its borders. These are largely the work of the Lodhas—an aboriginal tribe mainly found in Narayangarh and the neighbouring Thanas......' In the *Census*[2] of 1951 they have been described as follows:—

'The tract along the western border now known as jungle Mahals which is still covered with the remains of a decaying forest, was the home of the nomadic tribes who live on jungle products and spoils of the chase. Among them were the *Savaras*, a powerful race whose origin could be traced as far back as the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, and other aboriginal tribes who spread over the country from the Ganges to the Godavari. Their descendants may be identified with nomadic *Savaras* of the present day and the Lodhas, a tribe of hunters as their name implies'.

A number of Police Officers have also noted their criminal propensities beginning from 1905 upto the present day and some of these have already been reproduced in different books[3] and periodicals.

About the tradition of origin of this tribe, the Lodhas feel pride in declaring themselves as 'Savaras'. In the *Rāmāyana* we have the episode of Savari waiting for Rāma at the time of his exile. The 'Kirātas' or the 'Vyadhas' described in the *Mahābhārata* and in *Mangal Kāvyas* are regarded as their kin. Their chief occupation is to gather edible fruits and roots and the meat of hunted games and subsist on these like a wild people. Lord Jagannatha of Puri is said to have spent some time with Vishvavasu, the Mythical Savara Chief and was worshipped by him as Nilamadhava in Nilachal, somewhere in Orissa. Some legends linked with the name and exploits of the Savara Chief Vishvavasu and his daughter Lalitā forms the theme of a number of dramas in Oriya and Bengali and are staged even to-day. The episodes behind these legends, again, have been corroborated by a Vaishnava Sadhu named Rajendra Das Brahma Abadhuta in a pamphlet[4] published by him. He worked for some time for the upliftment of these down-trodden people by propagating a programme of socio-religious reorganisation. The locale of these episodes was Nilachal which existed in the Nilgiri Forests on the southern bank of the river Mahanadi. The Savaras who lived there were mainly Vaishnavas as well as warriors by nature and preferred hunting in the forests.

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[2] The Census of India 1951. District Hand Book, Midnapur, Calcutta.

[3] Daly F. C.: *Manual of Criminal Classes operating in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1916.

At that time a powerful king named Indradyumna of mythical fame reigned over that part of Orissa. Once he was told of the existence of the God Nilamadhava as quoted in the *Bhabiṣya Purāṇa* and he promptly sent his Brahman Minister, Vidyapati, in search of the Godhead to suitably instal Him for worship. Vidyapati made a sojourn of this jungle which had already a tradition of the existence of the God and was cordially welcomed by Vishvavasu there. But he was not allowed to see Nilamadhava, the closely guarded and all-pervading Tribal Deity. Thus detered, Vidyapati, an astute Brahman, played a ruse with the Savara Chieftain by offering to marry his daughter Lalitā. After marriage he lived there for sometime and waited for an opportunity to carry this Godhead to the capital of King Indradyumna at Puri which he succeeded to do with the help of Lalitā. The Lodhas still remember with a peculiar zest this episode of conspiracy. It is said that since then, they do not regard or respect the Brahmans as one of their ancestors was guilty of this profane act. The Brahmans, as a class, they hold, are the descendants of this son-in-law of the Savara Chief.

Whatever might have happened in the past to encourage propagation of such a legend the personal appraisal of the writer is that the word 'Lodha' is a corrupt form of the word 'Lubdhaka', meaning a trapper. But the Lodhas preferred to be called as 'Savaras' or 'Lodha-Savaras.'

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[4] Das R. N.: *Savarjatir Itibritta* (in Bengalī), Calcutta, 1933.

In the Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh) there is a land-holding class named 'Lodha' or 'Ludhi' numbering about 3,00,000. They are, according to some historians,[5] immigrants from the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh) and originally belonged to Ludhiana District of the Punjab. They adopted the appelation of 'Lodha' or 'Ludhi' after the name of the place of their origin. According to Nesfield the name 'Ludhi' has two different derivatives. One is 'Lod' which means a clod, according to which the term 'Ludhi' denotes a clod-hopper. The other is that the Lodhas have adopted their name from the 'Lodh tree' which grows in abundance in Northern India, the bark of which is collected and sold by them as a dyeing agent.

On the basis of the present ethnographic data however it is very difficult to establish any genetic relationship between the Lodhas of Midnapur and those of Madhya Pradesh.

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[5] Russel & Hiralal: *Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces,* Vol. IV, London, 1916.

CHAPTER II

VILLAGES AND DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

The Village and Domicile

The Lodhas live in the villages. Some of the villages have a mixed population, that is, in which other caste and community groups also live, while a few villages are entirely inhabited by the Lodhas. The writer has studied 31 sample villages scattered all over the Lodha concentrated Police Stations of the district of Midnapur. These villages were selected at random and have 408 Lodha families in all consisting of a population of 2,007, of which the males number 1,040 and the females 967. It is estimated that these families or population represent a fairly large cross-section of the Lodhas of the district and constitute 25% of the total Lodha population.

Table 4 gives the details of the villages and their population of all ages and sexes. Out of 31 villages, 8 are in the jungle areas and the rest are in more or less deforested plains or agricultural areas. These 8 villages are situated in the Jhargram Sub-division. Two other villages Kultikri and Radhanagar are also situated in Jhargram Sub-division, but these villages are mainly agricultural settlements.

These villages have got no definite plan, whether they be of a mixed population or inhabited exclusively by the Lodhas, located as they are in the far-flung areas of the district. In the agricultural settlements, roads and lanes of the villages are in a better condition, whereas in the jungle areas they are hardly in existence. In the jungle areas there are no roads but foot-tracks which run irregularly across the country. The main source of water is the *Bund* or artificial reservoir or spring or a natural water source like a stream or a rivulet. In every village a few public or communal places like the shrines of deities *Barām*, *Chandi* and *Sitalā* are also noticed and generally a virgin grove or a big tree in the forest is reserved and respected as the sanctuary of Barām.

The details of two villages are described here, one from the agricultural settlement of Kukai and another from the jungle settlement of Jaralata.

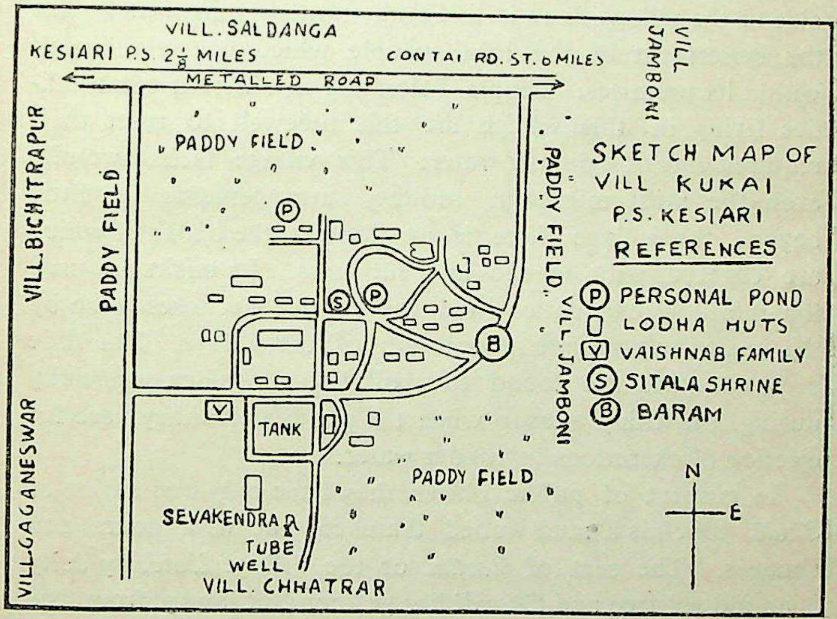
VILL. SALDANGA
KESIARI P.S. 2$\frac{1}{8}$ MILES
CONTAI RD. ST. 6 MILES
METALLED ROAD
VILL JAMBONI
PADDY FIELD
VILL. BICHITRAPUR
PADDY FIELD
PADDY FIELD.
VILL. JAMBONI
SKETCH MAP OF
VILL KUKAI
P.S. KESIARI
REFERENCES
Ⓟ PERSONAL POND
▯ LODHA HUTS
Ⓥ VAISHNAB FAMILY
Ⓢ SITALA SHRINE
Ⓑ BARAM
TANK
PADDY FIELD
N
E
SEVAKENDRA
TUBE WELL
VILL. CHHATRAR
VILL. GAGANESWAR

Fig. 1. Sketch map of Village Kukai.

The village Kukai is situated 3½ miles south-east of Kesiari Police Station. A metalled road runs from Khargpur Railway Station viz Kesiari to Contai Road Station. The village Kukai is situated on the southern side of this metalled road.

Paddy fields are found all around the village. In the rainy season unmetalled roads are used by the villagers whereas during dry months, these paddy fields are used for communication purposes. Inside the village, there are a number of lanes and bye-lanes which are extremely narrow and thorny bushes are found to grow here and there all along these lanes. The village huts have been constructed without any definite planning and are mostly huddled together. There are a few privately owned ponds used for domestic purposes and a large tank for general use of the villagers which is almost silted. This tank belongs to a local Zemindar. In one side of the village there is a 'Sevakendra'—an institution for the betterment of the local people which has a tubewell within its premises. People belonging to different communities living in this village use this tubewell to meet their requirements of drinking water. This village lacks awefully even the most minimum sanitary arrangements. A little beyond the village there is an old tank, the banks of which are covered with mango and *sāl* tress. Its banks are used for morning evacuations and for similar purposes both by the male and female population of the village. The little boys and girls are found to spoil the roadsides especially during the rainy season when the paddy fields they used for ejection of excretions lay under water.

In respect of public places, they have only one shrine of *Sitalā* which is a mud-walled thatched hut with doors and shutters. The seat of *Barām* or the Village Tutelary deity is an old *sāl* tree and *Chandi* has got her seat away from the village.

The jungle settlement of Jaralata is also 3½ miles away from the Jhargram Railway Station. There is an unmetalled road running from the station right up to the Jamboni Police Station which is very near to this village. This village is situated on one periphery of the jungle. The undulating tract abounds in scattered *mahuā* trees and is the land of the Lodhas. Probably this portion of the jungle had been cleared by some other people in the remote past for their own settlement but is now being inhabited by the Lodhas instead. A few Santals also live here.

TABLE 4

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY AGE, SEX AND VILLAGE

Sub-Dn.	Police Stn.	Village	No. of family.	Poputation		Total	0 — 5		5 — 10		10 — 15		15 — 20		20 — 25		25 — 30		30 — 40		40 — 50		50 — 60		60 — up	
				M	F		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
JHARGRAM	NAYAGRAM	(1) Nayagram	15	52	41	93	11	5	9	8	9	7	7	1	1	5	2	2	3	4	5	6	3	2	2	1
		(2) Damdasol	13	31	33	64	6	8	5	7	5	—	1	3	4	1	1	2	1	1	4	4	2	4	2	3
		(3) Kadamdiha	25	71	63	134	8	8	15	12	6	3	9	5	8	10	6	6	7	9	7	8	5	1	—	1
		(4) Pathardahara	17	41	43	84	7	7	4	5	7	3	—	3	3	6	2	6	8	3	4	5	4	3	2	2
		(5) Tapoban	2	7	5	12	—	—	1	—	2	2	—	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	1	—	1	—	—	—
	JHARGRAM	(6) Benasuli	7	25	13	38	7	—	4	3	4	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	1	—	—	—
		(7) Jaralata	17	37	36	73	7	8	8	4	1	2	4	6	2	5	4	2	5	2	3	6	3	1	—	—
		(8) Radhanagar	5	9	11	20	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	2	1	1	2	1	—	2	—	—
	JAMBONI	(9) Khatgeria	4	10	11	21	2	1	1	3	2	1	2	—	—	—	—	1	1	3	2	—	—	—	—	2
	SANKRAIL	(10) Kultikri	35	85	89	174	13	16	14	18	9	6	8	13	6	10	8	7	17	11	4	1	1	6	5	1
MIDNAPUR SADAR	SABANG	(11) Benadigi	5	15	10	25	5	3	1	1	1	—	2	3	1	2	—	—	3	—	—	—	1	1	1	—
	DANTAN	(12) Benadubi	8	23	21	44	3	5	4	5	3	—	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	—	1	—
		(13) Sankaridanga	21	41	65	106	3	19	6	9	4	6	4	8	5	8	2	6	12	6	3	—	1	2	1	1
	KHARGPUR	(14) Bandhgara	15	36	29	65	4	1	3	3	3	2	4	6	3	2	2	4	7	5	6	5	2	1	2	—
		(15) Malma	7	13	12	25	3	1	1	1	—	1	1	2	2	4	1	—	2	1	1	—	2	—	—	2
		(16) Balarampur	11	34	31	65	6	8	6	7	6	1	2	5	5	2	1	2	5	3	1	1	—	2	2	—
	KESIARI	(17) Saldanga	3	6	12	18	1	3	—	3	—	—	—	3	2	—	1	1	1	—	—	1	—	1	1	—
		(18) Hasimpur	9	19	11	30	3	2	3	1	2	—	2	2	2	2	2	—	3	3	2	1	—	—	—	—
		(19) Kukai	39	92	86	178	21	20	13	11	6	4	12	11	7	12	12	12	11	6	7	9	2	1	1	—
		(20) Rangtia	21	60	44	104	5	8	11	8	12	1	8	2	6	8	5	6	7	7	6	3	—	1	—	—
		(21) Simuldanga	26	58	55	113	14	9	10	8	4	3	3	6	5	10	11	6	7	7	4	5	—	1	—	—
	NARAYANGARH	(22) Ma-Mansa	14	38	33	71	4	3	8	4	7	3	2	6	2	4	7	8	3	1	2	—	1	4	2	—
		(23) Kasipur	6	14	13	27	3	4	2	1	1	1	2	2	—	2	2	1	2	2	1	—	1	—	—	—
		(24) Patli	8	22	20	42	5	4	3	2	3	1	3	4	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	—	2	1	—
		(25) Metial	6	9	12	21	3	2	—	3	1	1	—	1	2	4	1	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
		(26) Dihipur	8	20	22	42	2	3	3	2	3	3	—	6	2	—	3	2	—	4	—	1	4	1	3	—
		(27) Daharpur	15	41	37	78	7	10	6	4	5	2	5	10	3	2	6	3	2	2	2	3	3	—	2	1
		(28) Karangabari*	34	94	82	176	21	18	17	9	7	10	7	20	5	8	21	6	5	3	5	4	1	3	5	1
		(29) Bankibazar	4	15	10	25	3	1	3	—	2	3	2	1	—	2	—	2	3	—	2	—	—	1	—	—
		(30) Chakganka	4	10	8	18	3	4	3	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	1	—	—	—
		(31) Parulda	4	12	9	21	4	4	3	1	1	—	1	3	1	—	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL:			408	1040	967	2007	185	186	169	146	118	68	95	138	84	116	108	96	126	93	81	70	41	40	33	15

* The village Karangabari is extension of Dihipur.

The huts of the Lodhas are clustered in two rows in a haphazard fashion. There is practically no major roads or streets in the whole village. Water for domestic use as well as for bathing purposes is brought from a distant place, about a mile from a *Bund* or reservoir of water. A thatched mud-walled farm house has been recently constructed by the Agriculture College of Jhargram in one side of the village and a country liquor shop exists by the side of the main road leading to the village. The villagers perform their nature calls in the adjoining jungle. The place of *Barām* is a *sāl* tree inside the village. There is no other shrine or public places used by the villagers.

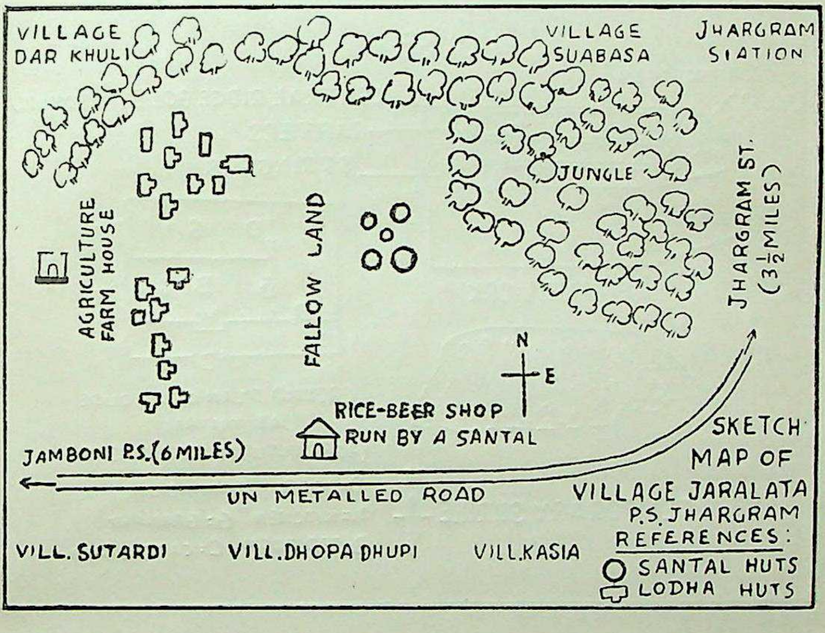
VILLAGE DAR KHULI
VILLAGE SUABASA
JHARGRAM STATION
JUNGLE
AGRICULTURE FARM HOUSE
FALLOW LAND
JHARGRAM ST. (3½ MILES)
N
E
RICE-BEER SHOP RUN BY A SANTAL
JAMBONI P.S. (6 MILES)
UN METALLED ROAD
SKETCH MAP OF VILLAGE JARALATA P.S. JHARGRAM
VILL. SUTARDI
VILL. DHOPA DHUPI
VILL. KASIA
REFERENCES:
SANTAL HUTS
LODHA HUTS

Fig. 2: Sketch map of village Jaralata.

Dwellings

Lodhas of the jungle settlements have small thatched huts straggling here and there. The huts have a rectangular ground plan, the four walls being constructed of branches of the trees or bamboo poles placed vertically. Later these are plastered over with mud and cowdung. The framework for the roof is made by different kinds of jungle woods or sometimes by bamboos. These are tied by a special type of rope prepared from *sābāi* (Ichaemum augustfolium) grass. Then straw bundles are placed on the frame all along the slopes for thatching. Sometimes mud-built walls are also noticed in the jungle areas. Majority of these jungle huts have no windows although small doors without plank shutters are found in every hut. This single room which constitutes the hut, is used by them for every domestic purpose, beginning from child birth to propitiation of the ancestral spirits. A raised earthen platform called *Isān* is also constructed near the hearth where offerings are made to the ancestral spirits. They have no definite choice for the orientation of the huts. Thus in the majority of the jungle settlements their huts are constructed in a sprawling fashion facing all sides and huddled together.

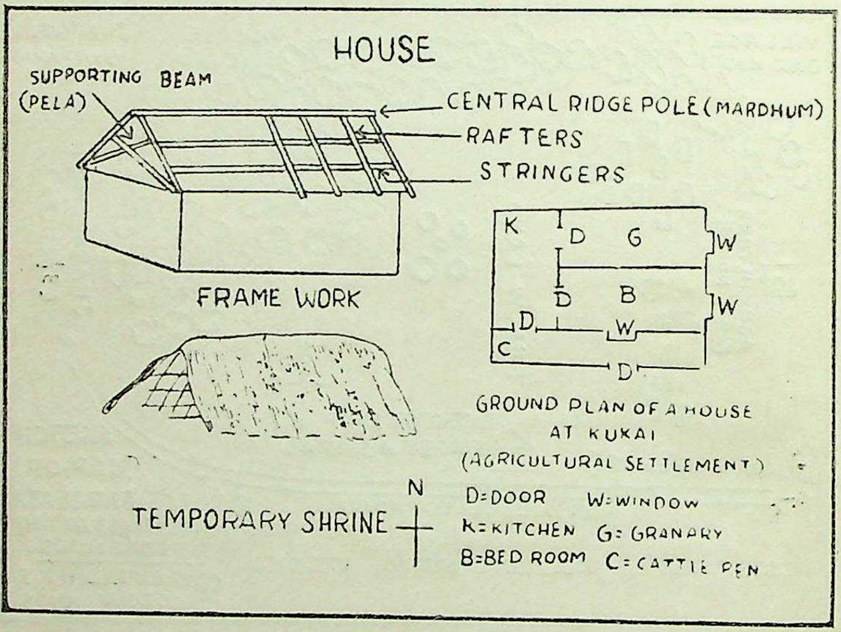
HOUSE
SUPPORTING BEAM (PELA)
CENTRAL RIDGE POLE (MARDHUM)
RAFTERS
STRINGERS
FRAME WORK
K
D
G
W
D
B
W
D
W
C
D
GROUND PLAN OF A HOUSE AT KUKAI (AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT)
N
TEMPORARY SHRINE
D=DOOR W=WINDOW
K=KITCHEN G=GRANARY
B=BED ROOM C=CATTLE PEN

Fig. 3: Details of the Structure of a hut.

In the agricultural areas a few comparatively better off families have mud-built thatched huts with more than one room. Their plinth is sufficiently raised from the ground and are provided with little windows and doors with shutters. A few agricultural families have small kitchen gardens attached to the huts, including a small courtyard. In such cases, these courtyards are fenced with uncut high bamboo poles to prevent access of man or animal from outside, as was found among a number of families in Kukai, Sankaridanga, Balarampur and Kultikri. As they generally make no arrangement for keeping cattle or goats separately, these animals are kept in one side of the verandah attached to the hut. Agricultural implements are also kept in a covered place in the rear of the hut but these are carried to the front verandah and stored there as soon as the agricultural operations start. Bipin Mallik of Kukai has got one additional *Baithak Khānā* (drawing room) for guests and visitors with sufficient number of doors and windows.

In the plains of Midnapur some Lodha settlements have tanks or wells or even tubewells for supply of water. There is practically no restriction against the use of such wells or tanks, and all communities like the Santals, the Bhumijas and the Lodhas can draw water from the same source. But the clean-caste Hindus like the Brahmans, Kayasthas and Mahishyas have separate tanks and wells within their own locality and they usually do not use the common wells for fear of ceremonial pollution. It was also observed that in case of need if one would ask permission to use a private tubewell or well, nobody refuses such favour provided the man is of the allied caste groups. One Lodha family of Dihipur (Rajani Kotal) has its own well for domestic use, from which other villagers can draw water as the owner has given them such permission.

Lodhas of the jungle areas are sometimes found to shift from one village to another. This is due to various factors like economic and social non-co-operations of the co-villagers or the neighbouring families, persistent oppression of the clean caste groups or the Police, etc. as was reported by some of the informants. They have very little personal belongings and at the same time the land holds no economic and sentimental attractions to them, the people being mostly landless. Their faith in magical powers and witchcraft sometimes haunting them incessantly is yet another factor which goads a man to leave his ancestral place and migrate to a safer abode elsewhere. An instance of such a case was found by the writer in Kultikri. Sometimes, easy availability of employment or jobs as day labourers elsewhere tempts a man to shift to such places. Galtu Lodhas and Piru Lodhas of Radhanagar have shifted their homes to Rajbandh, a nearby village. They said that this was because they got easy employment there. Apart from employment, illicit love between young men and women also sometimes necessitates the leaving of the village for a new hospitable haven for the lovers, and also for avoiding fine or ostracism whatever the panchayat might decide upon to punish them.

Changes of birth place are also noticed in the agricultural area of Sadar Sub-division. It also happens that a man decides to live in his father-in-law's place after marriage in case his wife refuses to go to her husband's place. This is another cause for the change of domicile. A few such examples have been cited in the chapter on 'Social Organisation' (Table 21), in this respect.

However, the Table on page 21 gives the causes of change of residence of the persons of a few villages during the period of survey among the Lodhas.

Population

The total Lodha population in the district of Midnapur according to the census of 1951 is 6,040. This, however, appears to be rather a low figure in the opinion of the writer. The total Lodha population will be about 8,000 as already discussed in detail. Table 4 shows the distribution of the population of 31 villages surveyed by the writer, according to age, sex and village.

TABLE 3

CHANGES OF THE RESIDENCE OF THE LODHAS WITH CAUSES

3741.

Name	Present village	Birth place	Causes
Chandra Bhakta	Damdasol	Sasasol (Mayurbhanj)	Police oppression
Bhusan Bhakta	Damdasol	Garigaon	For employment
Ganesh Kotal	—do—	Jamsola	For employment
Manglu Mallik	Babaichati	Nekragaja	Fear of witchery and ghost
Sambhu Mallik	Palasia	Pukuria	Police oppression
Dusa Bhakta	Babaichati	Tuhadua	Employment
Naru Kotal	Kadamdiha	Jhauri	Employment
Jestha Bhakta	—do—	Jhauri	Employment
Sujan Mallik	—do—	Pukhuria	Fear of witchery and ghost
Kesta Mallik	Saldanga	Kadamdiha	Police oppression
Guna Kotal	Phulgeria	Markundia	Employment
Babulal Bhakta	Untraced with family members	Kasba Brahmani	Police oppression
Radhanath Bhakta	Sabang	Kasba Brahmani	—do—
Iswar Bhakta	Satirhat	Hirapur	—do—
Satish Nayek	Kasba Brahmani	Gona	—do—
Lechu Bhakta	Kaijuri	Paikata	—do—
Kisori Nayek	Kasba Brahmani	Satta	—do—
Hari Nayek	—do—	Sabang	—do—
Kinu Nayek	—do—	Satta	—do—
Kangali Bhakta	Untraced	Kasba Brahmani	—do—
Trailkya Ahari	Patli	Ma-Mansa	—do—

It will be seen from the Table 4 (attached hereto) that the total Lodha population was found to be 2,007, of which 1,040 were males and 967 females. The total number of families involved was 408.

Table 5 extracted out of Table 4 shows the sex and age group distribution of the Lodhas.

It will be seen from Table 5 that the percentages of Lodha males and females in the age group 0-5 show preponderance of females by 1.45%. This is also seen in the All-India data of the 1931 Census where the percentage of females similarly

TABLE 5

SEX AND AGE GROUP COMPARISON WITH ALL-INDIA TRIBAL GROUPS (1931)

Age group with percentages	Lodha male	All-India Tribal male	Lodha female	All-India Tribal female	Lodha + —	Tribal + —
0—5	185		186			
%	17.78	17·85	19.23	18.40	1.45	0.82
5—10	169		146			
%	16.24	14.49	15.09	13.73	1.15	0.76
10—15	118		68			
%	11.34	12 17	7.03	11.44	4.31	0.73
15—20	95		138			
%	9.13	8.08	14.26	9.13	5.13	1.05
20—40	318		304			
%	39.56	30.34	31.41	30.87	0.85	0.53
40—60	122		110			
%	11.72	14.07	11.36	12.79	0.36	1.28
60—up	33		15			
%	3.17	3.27	1.53	3.64	1.64	0.37

exceeds that of males by 0.82%. In the next age group 5-10, the percentage of males exceeds that of females by 1.15% in the case of the Lodhas and by 0.76% in the case of all tribal people inhabiting India. The preponderance of males is very high among the Lodhas (4.31%) in the next age group 10-15 but in the All-India data for this age group, the males preponderate only by 0.73%. In the next age group 15-20, preponderance of females over males among both the Lodhas and tribal peoples of India is 5.13% and 1.05% respectively. In the next age group 20-40, the females preponderate over the males among both the Lodhas and the All-India tribal people but the difference is the least in comparison with earlier age groups; being only 0.85% among the Lodhas and 0.53% among the latter. The males preponderate over females in the next age group 40-60 but the difference is least marked; being 0.36% amongst the Lodhas in comparison with 1.28% for the All-India figure. The males amongst the Lodhas preponderate in the next age group 60-up, while in the

All-India sample the females slightly exceed the figure of males by 0.37%.

The present sample survey undertaken amongst the Lodhas has been on a much smaller scale in comparison with the All-India data collected during 1931 Census, but both of them show the same trend in sex ratio in all the age groups, excepting that of 60-up. Both the series show the trend of a fluctuating sex ratio prior to the 20-year age groups and only an equalisation is reached at the middle ages and then attaining again a male preponderance at the old-age groups. There is, however, an exception in the age group 0-5 where usually males predominate over the females. Amongst the Lodhas the ratio of the two sexes appear to differ very widely in the two age groups 10-15 and 15-20. No such discrepancy is found in the All-India sample for such age groups. It appears to be due to the small-sized sample of the present writer since, when these two age groups are taken together, the difference is levelled down to 0.82% with a preponderance of females. Compared with the All-India sample, when the above two age groups are combined there is also a female preponderance by only 0.32%. The difference between the figures of the Lodhas and those of All-India tribes in the highest age group may be due to the average longevity of the two sections. It appears that the Lodha males generally live a longer life than the females.

Family Size

As already stated 408 families were studied. These families have been classified here according to their size on a village basis:—

(i) Small-sized families, having 3 members or less.
(ii) Medium-sized families, having 4-6 members.
(iii) Large-sized families, having 7-9 members.
(iv) Very large-sized families, having 10 or more members.

The criteria of the composition of a family have been taken as a commensal family having a common kitchen, common economic resources and a common roof or domicile mainly. The type and number of families in the different villages in the Police Stations having Lodha concentration, have been shown on a village to village basis in Table 6.

TABLE 6

DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY SIZES ON VILLAGE BASIS

Police Station	Village	Family				Total
		Small sized -3	Medium sized 4-6	Large sized 7-9	Very large sized 10-up	
Nayagram	(1) Nayagram	1	8	6	—	15
	(2) Damdasol	4	8	—	1	13
	(3) Kadamdiha	8	11	3	3	25
	(4) Pathardahara	4	11	2	—	17
	(5) Tapoban	—	1	1	—	2
	(6) Benasuli	2	3	2	—	7
Jhargram	(7) Jaralata	7	7	3	—	17
	(8) Radhanagar	2	3	—	—	5
Jamboni	(9) Khatgeria	1	3	—	—	4
Sankrail	(10) Kultikri	8	21	4	2	35
Sabang	(11) Benadigi	1	3	1	—	5
Dantan	(12) Benadubi	—	7	1	—	8
	(13) Sankaridanga	5	11	4	1	21
Khargpur	(14) Bandhgara	3	11	1	—	15
	(15) Malma	4	3	—	—	7
	(16) Balarampur	1	5	4	1	11
Kesiari	(17) Saldanga	—	2	1	—	3
	(18) Hasimpur	6	3	—	—	9
	(19) Kukai	12	21	5	1	39
	(20) Rangtia	3	12	3	3	21
	(21) Simuldanga	6	17	3	—	26
Narayan-garh	(22) Ma-Mansa	4	6	3	1	14
	(23) Kasipur	1	4	1	—	6
	(24) Patli	2	5	—	1	8
	(25) Metial	4	2	—	—	6
	(26) Dihipur	1	4	3	—	8
	(27) Daharpur	5	6	3	1	15
	(28) Karangabari	5	23	5	1	34
	(29) Bankibazar	—	2	2	—	4
	(30) Chakganka	1	2	1	—	4
	(31) Parulda	—	3	1	—	4
Total:	31 villages	101	228	63	16	408
Percentage		24.75	55.88	15.44	3.92	

Small-sized families are a common feature of the Lodha society. Out of 408 families, 101 (24.75%) families have 3 members or less. Grown-up sons after their marriage, sometimes break away from their parents and establish a separate family of their own. Sometimes widows with their minor children live separately or they live singly.

Medium-sized families occur in the highest percentage, it being 55.88%. This type of family is distributed in almost all the Lodha villages.

The number of large-sized families is 63, the percentage being 15.44%. In small villages like Radhanagar, Demdasol, Khatgeria, Bandhgara, Kasipur and Patli, no family of this type has been met with.

There are only 16 (3.92%) very large families, having 10 or more members, among the 408 surveyed. In the jungle areas of Jhargram, for instance, in Kadamdiha, there are only 3 such families out of 25 constituting the village. There are 2 such families in Kultikri and 3 in Rangtia.

Marital Condition

The Lodhas have been classified into four distinct groups, in relation to the normal life cycle to signify their marital status. These have been indicated in the following:—

(i) Unmarried
(ii) Married (couples)
(iii) Widowed and
(iv) Divorced

Out of 1,040 males and 967 females, 553 males and 388 females are unmarried. It will be seen from Table 7 that none belonging to 0-10 years age group is married. In the next age group of 10-15 years, 114 boys and 41 girls are unmarried out of a total of 118 boys and 68 girls. In the age group 15-20, 66 boys and 11 girls are unmarried out of 95 boys and 138 girls forming this group, It is clear from the above that marriageable age of a girl is between 15-20,

TABLE 7

MARITAL CONDITION

Age group	Total population		Unmarried		Married (with couples)		Widowed		Divorced	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0— 5	185	186	185	186	—	—	—	—	—	—
5—10	169	146	169	146	—	—	—	—	—	—
10—15	118	68	114	41	4	22	—	1	—	4
15—20	95	138	66	11	27	115	—	3	2	9
20—25	84	116	14	4	65	200	2	2	3	10
25—30	108	95	3	—	102	91	3	1	—	3
30—40	126	93	2	—	117	77	3	12	4	4
40—50	81	70	—	—	78	49	2	20	1	1
50—60	41	40	—	—	39	21	1	18	1	1
60—up	33	15	—	—	31	5	2	10	—	—
Total	1,040	967	553	388	463	480	13	67	11	32

or in other words, the age when they had attained maturity. In the next age group 20-25 years, 14 men and 4 women are found to be unmarried out of 84 men and 116 women of this group. Again, out of 108 men and 95 women of the age group 25-30 years, only 3 males are unmarried. It was told that the reason for the men remaining bachelors so long was due to their inability to collect the bride price without which none could marry in Lodha society. None of the age group 30-40, except 2 males, are unmarried; one at Jaralata and the other at Kadamdiha. They suffer from physical deformities and are not able to maintain themselves.

As already stated, widow remarriage is in vogue among the Lodhas. Polygyny is also practised by a few. Table 7 shows a total of 463 males and 480 females as married couples, i.e. an excess of 17 females, which appears to be due to some people having plural wives. 17 males of different age groups were seen to have two wives, 5 of whom were married as maidens while the rest 12 were widowed or divorced.

During the period of survey 13 males and 67 females of different age groups were found to be widowed; the latter comprising 1 female of the age group of 10-15, 3 of 15-20, 2 of 20-25, 1 of 25-30, 12 of 30-40, 20 between the age 40-50 years, 18 between the age 50-60 years and 10 above 60 years.

The total number of divorced males found at the time of the enquiry was 11 of whom 2 belonged to the age group 15-20 years, 3 to 20-25 years, 4 to 30-40 years and 1 each to the age groups 40-50 years and 50-60 years. Correspondingly, 32 females were found to be divorced, 4 of the age group 10-15 years, 9 of 15-20 years, 10 of 20-25 years, 3 of 25-30 years and 4 were of the age group 30-40 years. The rest belonged to the age groups 40-50 and 50-60.

Literacy

Lodha individuals who are just able to read and write a little or can sign his name, are considered as literates. The total number of the literate persons in the various age groups in the different Sub-divisions of the district of Midnapur is given in the following Table.

TABLE 8

LITERACY

Age group	Jhargram Subdivision M	Jhargram Subdivision F	Midnapur Subdivision M	Midnapur Subdivision F	Total
0—5	—	—	—	—	
5—10	—	—	5	—	5
10—15	—	—	10	—	10
15—20	—	—	8	—	8
20—25	1	—	10	—	11
25—30	1	—	4	—	5
30—40	2	—	9	—	11
40—50	1	—	2	—	3
50—60	1	—	4	—	5
60—70	—	—	—	—	—
Total:	6	—	52	—	58
Percentage	—	—	—	—	2.88

Out of a total population of 2,007 in 31 villages, only 6 persons of Jhargram Sub-division and 52 of Sadar Sub-division could be called 'literate.' Both the young and the middle-aged people show very little interest in education. It may be mentioned here that the recent efforts of the Harijan Seva Kendra at Kukai appear to have changed the outlook of these people towards education. Out of the 52 literates from Sadar Sub-division, 26 are from Kukai alone. The total percentage of literacy among the Lodhas is 2.88%, while it is 23.17% in the rural areas of Midnapur District and 42.06% in the urban areas. Not a single Lodha woman was found to be literate.

CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC LIFE

Attempts have been made in this chapter to give an account of the econmic life of the Lodhas on the basis of data collected by sample survey of 100 families covering the five villages, Kadamdiha, Pathardahara and Jaralata in the jungle areas of Jhargram Sub-division and Kukai and Saldanga in the agricultural areas of the Sadar Sub-division of Midnapur. One family in the village of Saldanga was not included in this sampling to have a round figure of 100 familes.

Though the number covered is meagre in comparison with the total population of Lodhas living in this part of Midnapur, yet it will reveal the general patterns and trends of their economic life. The family budgets and day-to-day income and expenditure were estimated from the statements made by the informants at the time of enquiry. The epecific periods of collection of data have also been stated against individual cases.

Occupation

It is clear from Table 9 that Kadamdiha is a jungle settlement in which edible roots and tubers and hunting games are available in abundance. Here, the Lodhas, both male and female, depend mainly on food-gathering. Some of them again are engaged in agricultural operations as hired labourers. Only 2 persons cultivate their own lands and have adopted agriculture as their sole occupation. Similarly at Pathardahara, there are a few land-holding families like the Rajus, the Sadgops, etc. Thus the Lodhas, though they have very little land of their own, are in great demand for employment as agricultural labourers by the above land-holders. A Lodha at Kadamdiha is serving as Forest Guard whereas another man of Pathardahara is a *Chowkidar* or village

TABLE 9

OCCUPATION

Village	No. of families	Total members	Persons actually working	Collection of fuel, cotton, snake, roots & tubers & hunting games, fishes etc.	Cultivation in their own land	Day labourers (Agricultural & other types)	Service	Herdsman	Carpentry	Rearing of tusser cocoons
Kadamdiha	25	134	82	38	2	37	1	2	1	1
Pathardahara	17	84	47	18	4	23	1	—	1	—
Jaralata	17	73	44	42	—	1	1	—	—	—
Kukai	39	178	99	12	8	76	3	—	—	—
Saldanga	2	13	4	—	1	—	3	—	—	—
Total	100	482	276	110	15	137	9	2	2	1

watchman. Carpentry is the chosen profession of only two persons. At Kadamdiha one person is engaged in collection of tusser cocoons. The village Jaralata is also a jungle settlement where agricultural land is not sufficient. It is about 3·1/2 miles away from Jhargram town. The Lodhas of Jaralata collect edible roots and tubers for personal consumption. They also catch snakes and tortoises from the paddy fields or hares from the jungle and collect silk-cotton to sell all of these for cash. Collection of firewood or fuel from the jungle. however, is the main source of living of these people, though such activities offend against the law as these jungles are either private or Government reserves. In the adjacent towns, fuel is required by most of the families and thus they get a ready market for sale of their commodities. One Lodha at Jaralata is a domestic servant.

In the agricultural settlement of Kukai, the subsidiary occupation of the people is fishing including a good catch of small tortoises. Only 12 persons, both male and female, are engaged in this particular occupation. In the neighbouring areas there are a good number of silted tanks breeding these fishes and tortoises. A man of the same village is a Forest Guard and 2 persons serve as workers of a Khadi Centre.

Earnings from a particular type of occupation are not sufficient, in the majority of the cases, to maintain the families. So there is a shift towards other occupations like those of day labourers, including agricultural labour, and labourers for road construction, etc. In the year 1954 three persons of village Kukai started a petty business of supplying goats (for meat) to the Military Camp near Khargpur. They purchased these animals from the surrounding villages and supplied them under a sort of contract. But they confided to the writer that after all it did not pay and they had to shoulder a considerable loss even before completing half the deal. There is, however, no social stigma on such profession, though the Hindus, without exception, avoid cattle selling. This is generally done by the Mohammedans in this district. Only two persons worked as herdsmen in village Kadamdiha.

Among the Lodhas, there is no hesitation in accepting any job when it presents itself. Among Upper Caste Hindus, there are, in contrast, sharply defined likes and dislikes in the choice of occupations. Their major professions are indirectly linked with the economy of the locality, such as, catching of fish or tortoise, supplying firewood, silk cotton and some other pursuits like collection of honey, snakes' leather or tusser cocoons and supplying these to outside traders. Age and sex are the two factors on which the nature of occupations have been based. Social status has no direct bearing on the profession of an individual. It was found that even the village priest or the village headman did all sorts of jobs for their maintenance, as one Makra Bhakta, the village headman of Kadamdiha performs all sorts of domestic duties. Bhuban Kotal of Ma-Mansa serves as agricultural day labourer in the nearby villages. In the same way one Mathur, an old village priest of Jaralata mainly lives on begging. Suren Mallik, the priest of Mahischhar collects fuel from the jungle and so on. Thus we find, age and sex are the most important factors to determine the nature of economic activities. Table 10 shows in a general way the nature of economic activities of the Lodhas.

TABLE 10

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Occupation	Male	Female	Children
Domestic work	(1) Taking care of the children (2) Collection of firewood, grazing the cattle, husking and pounding of rice and in rare cases cooking	Sweeping or cleaning the house, bringing water for domestic use, preparing and serving food to the members, husking and pounding of rice	Taking care of the young boys when mother is busy with domestic work
Collection of food	Collection of fuel, silk-cotton, tortoise, fish and selling them in the market	Collection of fuel, silk-cotton, fish, tortoise, *mohuā* fruits and selling them in the market or to neighbouring families	Collection of *mahuā* flowers or fruits
Field work	Ploughing. hoeing, digging, manuring, transplanting, weeding & harvesting, carrying, threshing, stacking, etc.	Hoeing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, threshing when required	Help in threshing
Other pursuits	Day labourers for road construction, herdsmen, carpenters, tusser cocoon collection	Day labourers for road construction, helping in cattle keeping also	

It will be seen from Table 10 that men play an important part in all major economic activities. On rare occasions, they also cook or attend to minor domestic duties. Women never go in for catching snakes, collection of tusser cocoons or ploughing.

Collection of firewood is an important economic pursuit among the Lodhas of Jaralata. There is practically no agricultural land. Generally at about 8 a. m. the adults, both men and women, go to the nearby forest, each carrying a 'khontā' or spade and a 'tāngi' or axe. They try to avoid interception by the Forest Guards if it is a Reserved Forest, where fuel collection is forbidden. But the boundary of the jungle is so wide that the Lodhas can enter it at any point without detection. They generally collect dried branches of the trees and prepare head-loads of such bundles of faggots and carry them to nearby villages or towns for sale. Once these are sold, they again go to the jungle to gather another headload. Each headload fetches about 50 to 75 Naya Paise. At present the Forest Department of the Government are issuing licences at cheaper rates of 50 Naya Paise per month for a maximum of a headload of fuel per day. The stipulation, however, is that these headloads must be of dried branches only. Snakes, specially of the *Dhemnā* variety or alligators are caught and their skins are sold at about Rs. 3/- or Rs. 4/- each. During spring or summer, silk cotton and *mahuā* flowers or fruits are collected from the jungle and are dried and sold to local traders. These are some of the few commodities which fetch cash money. Besides, they also collect a few varieties of yam or tubers for their own consumption.

In the jungle areas of Kadamdiha and Pathardahara, edible roots and tubers are plentiful. A few families were found in the course of the enquiry during the month of October, to have no grain of rice for 7 or 8 days at a stretch, and they depended wholly on these wild tubers for their food.

Hunting is another avocation and a diversion from the monotony of daily life. They have bows and arrows and different varieties of traps and snares for catching birds and hares.

Fishing is an important pursuit of the Lodhas. During the rains or autumn, each Lodha family including young children, catch plenty of fishes and sell them to their more prosperous neighbours. In the plains, where there are many tanks, they catch fish in large quantities throughout the year. For fishing they use a few basket traps and hand-nets made by themselves. Catching of tortoise is another important and interesting pursuit by which they secure cash as well as meat to supplement their diet. A pointed bamboo stick is used to detect the location of a tortoise by prodding the mud in dried-up tanks or plunging against their shallow water to give them a chase.

In the jungle areas of Nayagram cultivation of *Ramākalāi* (bean) is practised by the majority of the Lodhas in the month of Ashar (June-July) This has been abandoned in many places now since private forests have been taken over by the State Government, who have banned this unauthorised cultivation. The Lodhas before the cultivation of these beans cleared the jungles during the summer months by felling the trees and before the advent of rains, prepared the soil for sowing with a hoe. Then a few seeds were sown in each pit made with the hoe. After rains, the plants grow profusely. These beans are plucked in Kartik (October-November), dried in the sun and sold in the market at a high price. Generally traders coming from outside purchase these beans for sale in other parts of the country.

Agriculture is another important avocation of the Lodhas living in the plains, specially in the Sadar Sub-division of Midnapur. Though most of the Lodhas are landless, yet a good many of them subsist by agricultural labour. Very few amongst the Lodhas own land either for cultivation or house building. The Table below indicates the total amount of land held by the Lodhas on tenure.

TABLE 11

LAND HOLDING (VILLAGE BASIS)

Village	No. of families	Total members	Total land owned (Homestead & cultivable)	Total land of other types cultivated by them as share-croppers	Average acreage per head
Kadamdiha	25	134	16 acres	6 acres	·119
Pathardahara	17	84	6 acres	5 acres	·071
Jaralata	17	73	1 acre	—	·013
Kukai	39	178	36 acres	20 acres	·202
Saldanga	2	13	6 acres	—	·461

From the above Table, it will be found that the Lodhas practically have very little land specially in the Sub-division of Jhargram. In Jaralata, only five persons have got small homestead lands owned by them. In Kukai and Saldanga, they have a very small quantity of homestead as well as cultivable land.

Under the system of *Bargā* cultivation (share-cropping), the owner of the land gets half of the total produce, while the cultivator is paid half for his labours. The average per capita of land (both cultivable and homestead) stands, as per Table above, at 0.134 acres approximately. Kumarappa[1] computed a figure of 0.7 acres of cultivable land available per head for food production on the basis of the total cultivable land available in India. Though it is extremely inadequate, he was of the opinion that it would suffice to meet our food requirements even under the existing mode of cultivation, if the system of land distribution and agriculture are completely re-organised. The following Table 12 furnishes the figures of land-holding Lodhas in the five villages surveyed.

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[1] Kumarappa, J. C. : *An Overall Plan for Rural Development*, Wardha, 1951.

TABLE 12

LAND-HOLDING (FAMILY BASIS)

Land owned in acres	No. of families holding such land	Percentage
5 acres or more	3	3
4 acres or more	3	3
3 acres or more	3	3
2 acres or more	6	6
1 acre or more	8	8
·5 acres or more	6	6
·25 acres or more	5	5
Less rhan ·25 acres	9	9
Landless	57	57

Makra Bhakta of Kadamdiha, Bipin Mallik and Haghari Nayek of Kukai possess more than 5 acres of land each. 57 families have no land at all. They have to depend on various other pursuits as stated before. The land normally belongs to the family. The father who is the head of the family, owns the land. After the death of the father, the land is divided among his sons in equal shares, Sometimes the widow with her minor children is vested with control over the family property. Land is sold or transferred mainly under the pressure of poverty. The writer was told by many Lodhas of Kukai and Dihipur that once their fathers and grandfathers had sufficient land in their possession. Due to litigation or harassment of various kinds, they had to sell out their lands. Now-a-days a good paddy field of one acre is sold between Rs. 800/- and

Rs. 900/- and the ordinary or *Dāhi* type of land is sold at Rs. 200/- per acre.

Recently the Government of of West Bengal are trying to rehabilitate the Lodhas of Auligeria, Dholkat and Dhansola in the Sub-division of Jhargram and at Kukai in the P. S. Kesiari and at Daharpur in the P. S. Narayangarh, by giving them aids, such as free land, huts, cattle and goats, etc. Consequently the quantity of land owned by the Lodhas of Kukai has increased appreciably. This additional land has not been included in the earlier Table.

The Lodhas are not as skilful in agriculture as many of their peasant neighbours. Paddy is the main item of production. Generally each plot is well ridged to contain water when the paddy is growing. Fields are first ploughed in the month of Magh (January-February) or Phalgun (February-March). Then manure, consisting of ashes or kitchen refuse or cowdung, etc. is scattered liberally on the furrowed fields during the summer months. Before the advent of rain, nursing beds for the seeds are prepared with special care. As soon as they grow up, the seedlings are transplanted in the paddy fields in regular rows. Grass and other unwanted vegetation are weeded out. When the ears of paddy begin to ripen, the stalks are cut with a sickle, bound in small bundles and carried home for threshing. These are carried by men, women and children on the head. When a sufficient quantity has been dumped in the courtyard, the threshing operations begin on an auspicious day. These small bundles of paddy are threshed on thick wooden planks with very hard strokes. Later chaff is separated with the help of a winnowing fan and grains are stored carefully. Table 13 gives the details of agricultural expenses per acre, if there is no failure of monsoon.

It may be pointed out here that the average cost of cultivation of an acre of land in the Lodha areas varies widely from village to village. The cost is appreciably less than that incurred in non-Lodha areas, specially in the eastern coastal

TABLE 13

AGRICULTURAL EXPENDITURE

Human labour	Animal labour	Seed	Repair of implements	Rent	Manure	Approx. cost of food on working days
Ploughing 10 days @ ·75 nP. =7·50	2 bullocks 10 days @ ·75 nP. =7·50	20 seers of paddy 5·00	8·00	4·00	40 baskets approx. 6·00	20·00
Transplanting 12 days @ ·75 nP. =9·00						
Weeding operations 2 days @ ·50 nP. =1·00						
Harvesting and stacking 8 days @ ·75 nP. =6·00						
Separation of straw, paddy etc. 4 days @ ·75 nP. =3·00						
Miscellaneous 2 days @ ·75 nP. –1·50						
Total =38 days =28·00	7·50	5·00	8·00	4·00	6·00	20·00 (75·50)

region of Midnapur where labour charges are very high, the minimum being Rs. 1.50 per day, as against .75 nP. among the Lodhas. However, manuring is not done in this area which reduces considerably the cost of production. Table 13 shows that two bullocks have to be hired and put under draft at least for 10 days for the preparation of the soil. This time depends also on the breed of the bullocks and the time of ploughing, i. e., whether it is done at the beginning of the season or at its end.

TABLE 14

NORMAL OUTTURN (IF WEATHER IS FAVOURABLE)

Paddy 11 mds. (902 lbs) @ Rs. 10/-	Rs. 110·00
Straw 4 Kāhans[2] @ Rs. 2·50	Rs. 10·00
Total	Rs. 120·00

It is important to note here that the average outturn varies from 820 lbs. to 1065 lbs. of paddy per acre. The person who has his own land and one or two bullocks and put in his own labour assisted by other members of the family and spends nothing in cash on this account generally have an yield as stated above. But serious difficulties are experienced when a man has to hire bullocks, or to purchase manure and to pay for labour. Under the system of share-cropping, the net cash earned by a man is Rs. 120/2=Rs. 60/- only. But the actual expenditure that has to be incurred to get the above outturn amounts to Rs. 78·50. Therefore, the cultivator is not able to get back even the amount he had invested. But in actual practice no cash money is spent for the manuring and the wages calculated are just an item of costing as the family members do all these works. Unemployment is a burning problem among the Lodhas. At best they could find work for a few days in a month. It may be said that Lodhas of many agricultural areas are given less wages than what has been shown in Table 13 and the costs of food they consume during this period have not been taken into account. Only a breakfast of fried rice (*Muṛi*) or soaked rice are served to the labourers which also costs about .50 Naya Paise. The supervision of the operations is done by the head of the family who plans the different phases of cultivation and allocates responsibilities for certain work to individual members.

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2 N. B. One *Kahan* is 1280 smaller bundles of straw.

Cattle and Domestic Animals

A survey of the cattle and other domestic animals were conducted in the year 1954. The data obtained are given in Table 15.

TABLE 15

CATTLE AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS

Village	Bullocks	Cows	Calves (Male & female)	Goat		Sheep		Fowl	
				M	F	M	F	M	F
Kadamdiha	22	7	7	22	28	—	—	30	58
Patharadahara	18	—	—	10	14	1	2	34	32
Jaralata	—	3	—	7	9	—	—	27	21
Kukai	36	7	3	5	9	—	—	28	39
Saldanga	1	1	—	2	2	—	—	3	4

It can be seen that in Kadamdiha there are alogether 22 bullocks, where the total cultivable land is 16+6=22 acres. Two bullocks are sufficient for ploughing of 3 acres of land. On enquiry it was learnt that some of the Lodha families brought cows at a quite tender age and fed them for a few years till they matured and gave birth to calves. These cows are rather given on lease to them by other castes and communities on condition that after the first issue they would have to return the cows and retain the calves. Thus a few families are found to possess some grown-up calves. These are sold to cultivators before the season for agricultural operations. In Jaralata three families were observed to have cows secured in the manner described above. They would have to return these cattle to their owners, each retaining the first calf.

In the jungle areas of Jhargram there is sufficient pasture land, while there is none at all in Kukai and Saldanga. Cattle roam about among shrubs or in small patches or grassy land beside the roads. They are, therefore, poorly fed or kept. Goats and fowl are preferred by them and they keep these in fairly large numbers. Goats are sometimes sold to outsiders who trade in these animals, and a few are kept for ceremonial occasions. Fowl is mainly consumed in the household, while some are sold for cash or sacrificed to their deities and spirits in fulfilment of vows made. The goats or fowl are both very poor in breed. Eggs are mostly sold to their neighbours.

Recently in Kukai, a few he-goats of the Black Bengal variety were given to individual families by the Government of West Bengal. But these goats could not stand the weather and died shortly after.

Tusser cocoon collection was an important avocation of the Lodhas of Nayagram, Gopiballavpur and Kesiari. Kesiari was famous for its high quality of tusser fabrics which attracted traders from outside to this tract of land during the 18th and 19th centuries. Gradually the trade declined to a dead point due to a number of restrictions enforced by the British Government, as a result of which a good number of weavers and the Lodhas who collected and supplied the tusser cocoons to them from the jungles were deprived of a vital means of livelihood and the trade disappeared altogether. Now-a-days tusser cocoon is collected only by a few Lodha families who sell the cocoons to traders from outside.

In Kadamdiha, Dharma Lodha cultivates tusser cocoons even today. Generally the virgin forests of *sāl* (Shorea robusta) or *āsan* (Terminalia tomentosa) trees are preferred for this type of cultivation. During the summer months, a patch of jungle is cleared and a guard house (*Ghaṛi Ghar*) is prepared with twigs and branches of the *bhelwā* (Semicarpus anacardium) tree. According to Lodha belief, this particular tree has got some magical powers to counteract the evil eye of a sorcerer who may destroy the tusser moths.

at its embryonic stage. In that hut, a new earthern pot is kept for storing cocoons. Generally, in the month of June, tusser moths come out of the cocoons, and mate with each other. Then they lay eggs, which are spread profusely on *āsan* and *sāl* trees. Later, the eggs hatch into cocoons on the leaves of trees. These cocoons are then collected and boiled to kill the animal inside and sold to traders.

This particular economic pursuit is a paying enterprise, but the Lodhas being ignorant of the value of jungle timbers like the valuable *sāl* trees, cut and fell them indiscriminately, thus losing a valuable source of income by way of raw wood and a feed for the cocoons. With the acquisition of forest lands by the State Government a ban has been imposed on such practices. As a result a few Lodhas who had this particular avocation in the jungle surroundings, have been displaced again.

Carpentry is practised not as a major economic profession, but due to dire need for money required to procure odd items for domestic consumption. Only two persons in the villages of Kadamdiha and Pathardahara are engaged in this trade. One of them was observed in the neighbourhood engaged in petty repair work. For this purpose they had purchased the necessary tools from the smithy of the local market.

No Lodha was found engaged in other types of business or trade.

For economic co-operation in day-to-day life the Lodhas maintain a high degree of social solidarity. The status of an individual does not stand in the way of such co-operation. On the question of religion the Lodhas assert that they are Hindus, and look upon other tribal people like the Santals, Mundas, Koras or Mahalis as belonging to inferior stocks. So no Lodha in the agricultural area would agree to serve under any member of the above tribes. They generally work as labourers under the various Hindu families living in the neighbourhood. They are also found to work as labourers for construction and repair of roads and in the rice mills on daily wage basis.

The preference for agricultural activities is almost lacking among the population. Though physically they are a robust and stalwart people, by habit they are not industrious and painstaking. Rather they prefer the pastime of a hunter or tortoise catcher and would go in batches for such excursions, male, female and children, all together. During the end of the rains, when it is possible to catch small fry in the paddy fields, the Lodhas are often prevented from doing so by the owners. Yet some of them steal into these fields at night, in utter disregard of the danger of snake-bite, for paddy fields here become infested by venomous snakes during the monsoon.

The general economic condition of the Lodhas is revealed from the total income and expenditure of individual families. Though the pattern of livelihood and income and expenditure vary widely in different places, yet the sample survey of 100 families which forms the basis of the study, is considered to have provided enough data with regard to their standard of living. The Table prepared from the data of family budgets in five selected villages generally represent the earning and expenditure of all income groups. Day-to-day accounts of income and expenditure for three months, i.e. February, June and October have been taken as the basis for calculation and these have been projected against the income for a full year. The month of February occurs just after harvest and the general population including the Lodhas of the locality get the advantages of buying paddy and other vegetables at cheaper prices. Many of them are then also employed in different harvesting operations as the demand for such labour is high at that time and they get a fair amount of cash as wages. The month of June is again a summer month when they collect different jungle produce and catch snakes and tortoises in different places, which are plentifully available at this time. Fuelwood is also available in abundance. October is a critical month not only for Lodhas but for other people too, because the paddy harvested earlier is almost exhausted by then and as the pesantry in general have very little cash, it is a period of overall austerity. There is also no scope for employment at this time.

For the calculation of the annual budget, the income and expenditure of the month of February was multiplied by three covering January, February and March with February as 'mean', according to the writer. But April to September are the months in which the people solely depend on various food-gathering pursuits. Hence the budget of June was multiplied by six covering all these months. October to December are the leanest months of the year, and the unit of budget for October was multiplied by three, with October as the base. In this way the budgetary estimate of the whole year has been prepared.

TABLE 16

INCOME GROUP AND FAMILIES

Income Group (In Rupees)	Families of the villages surveyed					Total	Percentage
	Kadamdiha	Pathardahara	Jaralata	Kukai	Saldanga		
On begging only	—	—	2	1	—	3	3
100-200	3	1	2	1	—	7	7
201-250	2	3	—	2	—	7	7
251-300	4	4	1	4	—	13	13
301-350	3	3	—	—	—	6	6
351-400	4	1	1	7	—	13	13
401-450	4	5	3	8	1	21	21
451-500	2	—	3	5	—	10	10
501-550	1	—	3	4	—	8	8
551-600	—	—	1	—	—	1	1
601-700	—	—	—	2	—	2	2
701-800	—	—	1	2	1	4	4
801-above upto 1600	2	—	—	3	—	5	5
Total	25	17	17	39	2	100	

It will be seen from Table 16 that only three families in all these villages completely depend on begging. They are old men. Mathur of Jaralata has some grown-up children but they do not care to look after his comforts. 13% of the families have an income of Rs. 251-300/-per annum whereas 21% belong to Rs. 401-450/- income group. 5% of the families have an income of Rs. 801/- and above. These families are 3% in Kukai which is an agricultural area while the rest 2% belong to village Kadamdiha.

Items of Expenditure

Family budgets, specially the figures of expenditure, have been compiled on sample survey of these families. Table 17 shows the nature of expenditure on a percentage basis with regard to various items, e.g. (i) food, (ii) clothing, (iii) narcotics including country-made rice beer or liquor, tobacco, etc., (iv) fuel, (v) social entertainment including subscriptions for worship of village deities and festivals and feasts, etc., (vi) education, (vii) litigation, (viii) medicine, (ix) contingency, e.g. house repairing, annual purchase of implements, purchase of land, etc., (x) savings.

TABLE 17

ITEMS AND PERCENTAGE OF EXPENDITURE AND SAVINGS

Items	Percentage
1. Food, including vegetables, oil & protein	85·10
2. Clothing, ornaments	3·70
3. Narcotics, (Tobacco, liquor, etc.)	6·00
4. Fuel	1·04
5. Social entertainment, subscription, feasts, etc.	1·15
6. Education	0·10
7. Litigation, fine, etc.	0·11
8. Medicine	0·23
9. Contingency: repairing, purchasing of agricultural implements, building materials, etc.	2·80
10. Savings, land purchase, etc.	0·7

The average expenditure per family per year is about Rs. 431·50. From Table 17 it will be seen that 85·1% of the total expenditure is incurred on food. The average family size is 4·9 persons. The standard of living and the nature of food consumed by the Lodhas vary according to the income of individual families. Specially in the jungle areas of Kadamdiha and Pathardahara, edible roots and tubers are gathered from the jungle in sufficient quantities and used as supplementary food or sold for cash. Their cash earnings help them to purchase rice or other necessary articles of food. In the jungle area of Jaralata, the Lodhas mainly depend on the income accruing from collection of fuel and their sale in the market. This fetches them just enough cash to buy their food. But the major part of the cash earnings is spent in purchasing rice beer or *Hānriā*, specially in this village. A rice beer shop is situated just by the side of the main road. In the agricultural areas of Kukai fish constitutes an important cash-earning commodity. A good number of families of this village were found to starve or remain without any food for the whole day. This is a common phenomenon in the life of a Lodha here. Even the children are kept starving. Sometimes they are found to collect some edible small or big fruits and leaves to tide over the period of starvation. One woman was found by the writer to swallow a morsel of soil in crushing hunger. Their food consists of rice, pulses, chillies, potatoes, brinjals and generally mustard oil. Fish, meat and eggs are occasionally used. A few edible tubers, roots, leaves, etc., are also collected from the fields or jungles when available. Only three families have small potato fields and a few plantain trees of their own. Sugar, jaggery, etc., are also purchased in case of necessity if means permit. Rice beer has ceased to be consumed in Kukai for the last twelve years with the establishment of a Khadi Centre, the workers of which also preach prohibition.

During summer months, a few fruits like mango, *mahuā*, tamarind, etc., are collected by children as well as adults.

Milk is never purchased to feed the children. Indeed the Lodhas have very few milch cattle of their own.

In the jungle areas, specially in Jaralata, the Lodhas generally take two meals a day if they can afford to do so. The composition of such meals and the hours when they are taken are as follows:—

Morning at about 8 a.m.	Boiled rice soaked overnight in water with chillies and salt and stale curry or boiled roots for children.
Evening at about 5 p.m.	Rice, pulses, curry, fish or meat, if available. Rice beer in small quantity is also taken after a man has returned from the market after a day's hard toil.

Children are supplied boiled roots and tubers by their parents before they go for the day's work. In other villages like Kadamdiha, Pathardahara, Kukai and Saldanga, all adult members of a family have to do outdoor work. At about 7 a.m. children are served with soaked rice or puffed rice. Then at about 9 a.m. all the working members return home and take their breakfast consisting of soaked rice or gruel and water. If food is not available at any time, they have to fast. Sometimes, working members of the family go to catch fish, tortoise, etc., and come back after selling these in the nearby villages, or exchanging them for rice if possible. Then the rice is cooked and they sit at their meals at noon. If there is no food in stock, they cook once in the evening whatever items they have been able to collect in the day or take nothing at all. If any rice is available, it is first served to the children. Seasonal variations in the menu may be noticed specially just after the harvest or when they are employed in road construction or repairs and some cash. August, September and October are thought to be bad months by the Lodhas as during this long period they hardly get any work to support them.

Clothing is another important item of their expenditure. But the survey of the families shows that almost all persons have only one pair of coarse cloth. Almost all families have got two pieces of napkin, specially for the use of the male members. Jajneswar of Kukai had only one napkin at the time of investigation and he used to dry it on his own body after bath for want of another piece to put on. Young boys and girls upto about seven years remain completely naked. Sometimes they are dressed with a thin piece of loin-cloth tied to a cord round the waist at both ends. *Sāris* for the women are purchased in the local markets, but their number per family would not exceed one or two. Shirts and *chādars* are not sufficient for the requirement of individual families. As a result they are very dirty in appearance as this single piece of wear is soiled very quickly. They cannot afford to have beddings or rugs or blankets. In Jaralala a pit is dug in the floor of the hut where wooden pieces are kept burning during the winter to supply necessary warmth. Some vertical poles are fixed round the pit with cross-bars to prevent children from slipping accidentally into the fire.

Fuel has to be purchased in Kukai and Saldanga only. In other jungle villages they collect these from the nearby jungle and forests. In Kukai, cowdung cakes are also used as fuel, though a few agricultural families having their own cultivable land use this principally as manure.

Educational expenditure is nominal. Only a few families of Kukai purchase books and slate pencils, etc. for the school-going children.

Contigency expenditure includes house repair, purchase of new pots and plates for the family from time to time, etc. They have very few articles of domestic use. Specially in Kadamdiha and Jaralata earthen pots and cheaper German silver utensils are purchased by most of the families for domestic use. A few families in Kukai have utensils made of brass.

They have very few household implements. Cooking implements consist of a few earthen pots, iron pans or aluminium vessels and plates. In the families who are better off economically, a few brass pots and plates, glasses. etc. could be found. Specially in villages like Kukai and Sankaridanga, the majority of the Lodha families have brass pots and vessels as they could buy these at cheaper rates from the local *Kānsāris* or the caste of bell-metal workers.

They have bows and arrows, different varieties of *Khantās* for digging purposes, bill-hooks and axes for cutting. Arrow-heads, axe-heads, etc. are purchased from blacksmiths at the local market on cash and shafts or staves are prepared at home from the wood or bamboo available in the locality.

Musical instruments are quite in use in the agricultural areas and also in the villages under the Police Station of Nayagram. One such popular instrument is *Chāngal* or a circular cross-drum covered on one side by means of hide. These instruments are the properties of individual families.

Womenfolk use ready-made bangles of German silver or garlands of glass-beads. They also tatoo their bodies, specially the upper arms and chest, with floral designs. Gold and silver ornaments are rarely found on the persons of women except in a few families of Kukai.

For treatment of diseases, they resort to the local medicine-men or medical practitioners, if any. Locally available herbs, etc. are used by some people as they cost very little and are available in plenty.

Two families in Kukai were able to save Rs. 300/- each one of whom wants to purchase land while the other intends to construct a new hut.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Lodhas and their Neighbours

The Lodhas live surrounded by different Hindu castes and tribal communities. They are easily identified by their name 'Lodha'; yet a considerable variation in the term used for their identification is noticed in many places. Specially in the jungle areas of Jhargram, the term 'Lodha' is used as a surname with the name of an individual. But in other places, both in Sadar and Jhargram Subdivisions, some among them use the surname of 'Savara' to identify themselves with the ancient forest-dwelling tribe mentioned even in the *Rāmāyana*. Again, their *gotra* name is also used as suffix in many places of Midnapur.

The Lodhas refer to tribes like the Santals, the Mundas, and the Koras as 'Adivasis' or aboriginal, while upper caste Hindus like Brahmans, Kayasthas, Mahishyas, Rajus and Sadgops are referred to as 'Bangali Babus' or Bengalee gentlemen. Thus a caste distinctness is maintained by them in all social affairs although they might live in an entire village or scattered among other communities. In respect of their inter-caste co-operation, specially with regard to the economic activities, they also observe a certain amount of caste solidarity as described before, such as, although they need employment very badly, they would not serve in the houses or fields of the Adivasis. They would not also take any cooked food from them.

The Lodhas are strictly an endogamous people; only two cases of inter-caste marriage were recorded from two villages in which other caste groups, specially one Raju, Rudra Pradhan of Benadubi, married one Lodha woman and another Sadgop, Pitambar Bera of Rangtia, has also a

Lodha wife. Both of them, however, were excommunicated by their respective castes. They, therefore, live among the Lodhas, although they have neither been formally accepted as Lodha nor given up their surnames. Two more cases where two Lodha women have been kept as concubines by members of the upper castes were also found, one in the village of Kukai and the other in the village of Pathardahara. But these are not cases of marriage. The men concerned have not, however, been punished by their castes as they are both rich and influential.

In spite of these stray cases of matrimonial alliances in one from or another, the Lodhas as a whole have to face some sort of social seclusion. This is due to various reasons. As they are more or less criminal-minded with no honest profession for their living, and as they are extremely poor and at the same time reluctant to do hard labour, they receive very little encouragement from their neighbours in the matter of employment. Rather, when any crime is committed near their settlement, they are generally suspected both by the local people and the Police Officers. Sometimes they are harassed, and sent up for trial. In this way, the position of the Lodhas has been undermined. Even after denotification, their notoriety continues as before. This state of affairs has got some advantages on the part of the neighbouring communities. Sometimes the local people demand free or cheap labour, tips etc. from the Lodhas; as a result those people have developed fear and suspicion against their well-to-do neighbours. Though artificial friendship or ritual friendship is not altogether absent among them, yet a spirit of hostility continues and sometimes it breaks out in the from of riots.

In 1960-61, a violent attack was made on the Lodhas of Dhansola, P. S. Binpur, in the sub-division of Jhargram where the local Mahatos took the lead. They looted the Lodha settlement mentioned above and set fire to their huts. They took away their household belongings and domesticated animals like fowl, goat, sheep etc. *en masse*. During the occurrence most of the Lodhas were out of their village except a few women and children. After the men returned to the village, they became panic-stricken when they saw the intensity of the devastation. A few children had been seriously beaten by the riotors and some children were found to have taken shelter in the neighbouring jungles. It was difficult for their unfortunate parents to find them out. The local Block Development Officer of Lalgarh (four miles away from this place) came to the spot and rescued them at last. He sheltered the victims for a few days in his quarters. The District Magistrate, the Police Superintendent and the Special Officers for the Tribals came and tried to ease the situation. Even they could hardly restore confidence in the mind of the sufferers. Some of them left their homestead for good though the Government of India made provision for their rehabilitation in that particular place.

Another incident was reported from Kalajharia in the same sub-division in which the whole Lodha village was set fire to by some of the neighbouring communities in broad daylight when the local Police practically failed to save them.

Occurrences like these prove that the relation of the Lodhas to the neighbouring communities is not always healthy.

Clan

The Genealogical method has been employed for studying the social structure, clan organisation and totemic beliefs of the Lodhas. It was found that people could very rarely recall the names of ancestors beyond their grandparents. Many cannot even remember their mothers' names. The men of the older generation have a detailed idea of the clan totems and taboos, but the younger folk seem to be fast losing these traditions, and they have hardly any interest left in such matters.

Clan organisation is an important feature of the Lodha society. All individuals belong to one clan or another. Each clan has a totem name, and strict taboos or restrictions are observed with regard to them. This will be described more fully later on. Marriage within the clan is prohibited, although one exception was actually recorded out of 476 cases investigated. There is practically no difference in the status of clans; only members of the Kotal clan are treated with more respect, because the task of serving as bailiff in the village is regarded as the monopoly of this clan.

The Lodha clan is a patrilineal unit. After marriage girls are initiated into the respective clans of their husbands. Both father's clan or husband's clan are respected and the prescribed restrictions are observed by women even after marriage. Girls, before marriage, have to observe death pollution for the same number of eleven days, as is done by all other members of her family. But after marriage, they observe mourning for three days only in case of death of their father or mother only. The totemic objects associated with the clan or *gotra* names are considered to be sacred.

The following clans were found among the Lodhas.

TABLE 18

CLAN

Name	Totemic objects
1. Bugta, Bhakta	—‘Chirkā ālu’, a kind of yam available in the jungle.
2. Mallik	—‘Makar’, a kind of shark or sea-monster. The Sāl fish is treated as totem
3. Kotal	—‘Moon’ and ‘Grasshopper’.
4. Laik, Layek, Nayek	—‘Sāl fish’ (Ophicaphalus marulius).
5. Digar	—‘Porpoise’.
6. Paramanik	—A kind of bird named ‘Mānik’.
7. Dandapat or Bāg	—‘Bāgh’ or tiger.
8. Ari or Ahari	—‘Chāndā fish’ (Ambasisis ranga).
9. Bhuiya or Bhunia	—‘Sāl fish’ (Ophicaphalus marulius).

Bhugta, Bhukta, Bhakta

This clan name is current in almost all the villages surveyed. Out of 408 families, 120 families, i.e. 29·4%, belong to this particular clan. So it may claim to have the largest number of members. The members of the Bhakta clan think that '*Chirkā ālu*' or a kind of jungle yam is their totem. The clan members do not consume, eat or collect this particular variety of yam for any purpose whatsoever. According to Makra Bhakta of Kadamdiha, if a member of the Bhakta clan unknowingly strikes a yam with a hoe when searching for other roots in the jungle, he would see blood coming out of the spot thus hit. If a man of Bhakta clan happens to cut the yam unknowingly, he would have to bow down or make obeisance before it and throw away all the earthen utensils of his family and substitute new ones in their place as a mark of mourning. Later, all the family members would take bath as this incident is thought to be a social pollution. Thus the totemic object itself is regarded as a human being ; and any injury to it is equivalent to injuring one's relatives or ancestors.

The Bhakta clan is divided into two sub-clans, one is called *Bara* (superior) and the other *Chhota* (inferior) Bhaktas. The *Bara* Bhaktas affiliate themselves with the bigger variety of yams while the *Chhota* Bhaktas with the smaller variety of yams as their totems. The clan members do not intermarry, as this would amount to incest. The popular belief is that if they marry among themselves, their ancestral spirits will become aggrieved and mishaps or accidents in the form of death or serious illness may visit the family. In Kukai, Gour Kotal fell in love with Subhadra, daughter of Rakhal Kotal of the same village and later married her, though a few villagers objected to it. They belonged to the same clan. After a few days of the marriage, Gour's father died of cholera and it was thought by the villagers that this was due to the violation of clan-totemic rule. The marriage was, however, not dissolved.

In about forty cases, it was, however, found that marriage had taken place between the two sub-clans, with one qualification. *Bara* Bhaktas of the Bhakta clan may take wives from the *Chhota* Bhaktas, while *Chhota* Bhaktas are not allowed to take wives from the *Bara* Bhaktas. *Bara* Bhaktas are considered superior in status, and to give away in marriage a girl to *Chhota* Bhakta bridegroom would entail loss of status.

Mallik

Malliks are distributed in almost all the villages except a few like Tapoban, Malma and Parulda. The total number of families belonging to this particular clan is 78. The clan members have adopted '*Makar*' a kind of shark or mythical sea-monster, as their totem. Literally 'Mallik' means a particular variety of 'swan'. However, their traditional custom is not to touch or even hurt the totemic object. But some of the members of the Mallik *gotra* told the writer that they regarded the '*Sāl fish*' (Ophicephalus marulius) also as their totem, and these fishes are generally large and as such, signify a higher social status.

Kotal

There are altogether 68 Kotāl families in the villages under survey. Kotāl denotes a bailiff or an assistant to the king in Bengali. The village messengers, sometimes termed as Kotal, have an important position in the socio-political life of the Lodhas. Sometimes *Dākuās*, i.e. village messengers, are selected from this particular clan and they are also found to help in marriage ceremonies. At the time of 'second marriage' of girls, i.e. when they attain puberty, the Kotal acts as the priest, instead of the *Deheri*.

Members of the Kotal *gotra* have adopted the 'Moon' as their totem. They observe the following taboos:—

When the moon disappears during *Amābaṣyā* (New Moon), members of the Kotal clan practically go into ceremonial pollution as a sign of mourning and throw away their earthen cooking pots, which have to be replaced by new ones on the day following. These are again thrown off during the next new-moon day, and so on. They never kill or injure grasshoppers which are called by them '*sān*'; these are thought to be children of the moon. According to Ram Kotal, the Kotal clan is superior in status because only the members of that particular clan are authorised to conduct marriage and other associated ceremonies. Hence this prohibition has been enforced to maintain their high status.

As the Kotals enjoy higher status in Lodha society, they do not allow bullocks to be castrated in their own homes. Ram Kotal of Kukai generally exchanges his bulls with those of others, such as Lakshindra Mallik of the same village, who had his bulls castrated by the Karangas, a scheduled caste people living in the locality. If a member of the Kotal clan is unable to get a castrated bull in exchange from a neighbour, the alternative is to send the bull to the house of a member of the non-Kotal clan and to make arrangements for castration there. After six or eight months the bull is brought back home. The owner of the bull has to bear the expenses incurred for this purpose.

Layek, Laik, Nayek

The total number of Layek families is 68 in 31 villages under survey. The term 'Nayak' literally means a 'leader'. But *Lāik* or *Lāyek* connotes a country soldier. The Layek or *Chuār* rebellion was a famous rebellion in which the militia raised by the local zemindars bravely fought against the British for a pretty long time (1771-1816) in the western part of Midnapur. These soldiers were generally recruited from the robust tribal groups and given the popular appelation 'Lāyek' or 'Pāik', It is very difficult to assess whether Lodha-Layeks have derived their surnames from their early military profession or not. There are also a good number of instances of changing surnames by Lodhas. Dhunda Singh and Pachu Singh of Sankaridanga belong to the Kotal clan. A local zemindar of Manoharpur once employed Dhunda's and Pachu's fathers as his *darwans* and gave them the honorofic title of Singh or 'lion'. Though Pachu and Dhunda did not serve the zemindar, yet they use the title of Singh as their surname, and are well-known in the locality as Dhunda Singh and Pachu Singh. In the same way, a few Lodhas of Balarampur and almost all the Lodhas of Kultikri use the surname 'Das' meaning a 'servant'. 'Das' is a surname in use among members of the Vaishnava Sect and Lodhas often adopt this surname probably due to Vaishnava influence. Again, the two surnames 'Pradhan' and 'Bera' are used in the families of some Lodhas due to intercaste marriage. If these things are a guide, they would point to a change in the surname of some of the clans brought about under certain circumstances as is the case with the 'Layeks' or the country soldiers of the local zemindars who have retained the title of their forefathers. However, the Layek *gotra* members of the Lodhas consider *Makar* or *Sāl* fish (Ophicaphalus marulius) as their totem and they do not eat or kill that particular fish at any time. The same totemic rule is observed by the 'Mallik' and the 'Bhuiyā' *gotras* of the Lodhas. But in spite of common totem they intermarry. 'Layek' is again divided into two sub-clans, one superior and the other inferior like the 'Bhaktas' described earlier.

Digar

The total number of 'Digar' families is 21 in the villages that were surveyed. In Bengal 'Digar' signifies a 'group' or 'gang'. The members of the Digar clan have taken 'porpoise' as their totem. They never touch or injure the creature.

Parāmānik

The total number of families of this particular clan in the villages surveyed is 20. The numbers of the 'Paramanik' clan have chosen 'Manik', a kind of large bird, as their totem. They refrain from killing and injuring these birds and never take its meat.

Dandapāt or Bāgh

The total number of the *Dandapāt* families is 10 in the 31 Lodha villages surveyed. They consider 'tiger' as their totem. They respect the tiger so much so that when a roar of the animal is heard at a distance, they offer salutations to it with folded hands. They do not have food restrictions under the totemic rules. They never kill a tiger. In Bengali '*Dạndapāt*' signifies an Official in charge of peace and order,

Āri, Āhāri

The total number of the families of the Āhāri clan is 19 in all the villages under survey. The members of the Ari or Ahari *gotra* have *Chāndā* fish (Ambasisis ranga) as their totem. These fishes are almost flat and circular in shape and silvery white in colour. They never eat the *Chanda* fish. The woman of this *gotra* never wear conch-shell bangles as they think the shape of the conch-shell is more or less like that of a *Chāndā* fish. Hence they observe this taboo. Sometimes a few Shamans in the jungle area of Jhargram are also termed as '*Āhāri*.'

Bhuiyā, Bhuniā

The total number of this particular *gotra* families is 1 only. They also consider the 'sāl' fish (Opicaphalus marulius) as their totem.

The geographical distribution of the clans is detailed in Table 19.

TABLE 19

CLAN DISTRIBUTION

Village	No. of families	Bhugta, Bhakta	Mallik	Kotal	Layek	Digar	Paramanik	Dandapat	Ahari	Bhuiya	Others
1. Nayagram	15	7	2	1	2	1	—	—	—	2	—
2. Damdasol	13	5	—	5	1	—	1	—	1	—	—
3. Kadmdiha	25	8	7	2	2	—	1	—	4	1	—
4. Pathardahara	17	8	3	3	1	—	—	—	2	—	—
5. Topaban	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6. Benasuli	7	4	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
7. Jaralata	17	13	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
8. Radhanagar	5	3	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
9. Khatgeria	4	3	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
10. Kultikri	35	9	11	3	3	3	1	—	5	—	—
11. Benadigi	5	2	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
12. Benadubi	8	4	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	Raju 1
13. Sankaridanga	21	4	8	—	1	2	3	1	2	—	—
14. Bandhgara	15	—	5	2	3	—	—	4	1	—	—
15. Malma	7	4	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	—
16. Balarampur	11	—	1	4	—	5	—	—	1	—	—
17. Saldanga	3	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
18. Hasimpur	9	1	2	1	3	—	1	1	—	—	—
19. Kukai	39	4	7	10	14	3	1	—	—	—	—
20. Rangtia	21	4	3	4	6	—	1	2	—	—	Raju 1
21. Simuldanga	26	7	6	4	3	—	5	1	—	—	—
22. Ma Mansa	14	3	—	9	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
23. Kasipur	6	—	—	1	4	1	—	—	—	—	—
24. Palti	8	1	2	2	--	—	2	—	1	—	—
25. Metial	6	—	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
26. Dihipur	8	5	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
27. Daharpur	15	7	2	3	1	2	—	—	—	—	—
28. Karangabari	34	10	3	6	11	—	1	1	2	—	—
29. Bankibazar	4	1	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
30. Chakganka	4	1	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
31. Parulda	4	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—
Total:	408	120	78	68	67	21	20	10	19	3	2
Percentage:	100	29·41	19·11	16·66	16·41	5·14	4·95	2·45	4·65	0·75	0·49

Family

From the nature of their composition, the Lodha families may be grouped into several categories according to the numbers and their economic relation. The basic or elementary family is composed of parents and unmarried children only, which has been classified here as 'A' type. It has also a variable from where a further generation of old father or mother of the existing head of the family i.e., member of the family of orientation live together. Sometimes a divorced daughter without any child remains with her parents. These are classified as 'B' type simple families. The third variation of elementary family is rather complicated. In this type a divorced woman or widow is married to a widower or a divorced man or a bachelor with the dependent children of previous union. Apparently this type of family unit is monogamous and the couple live together in a common residence with mutual economic co-operation. These are classified as simple or elementary types of families of 'C' category.

The second type of family is the polygynous type of family in which two or more wives with their respective children live together. Here two simple or elementary families are grouped together with a common tie who is the husband or the head of the family. All of them also share a common residence.

The third type of family is the joint or extended type. In this particular type of family married brothers with their respective children, sometimes also with old parents, live together. Widowed mother-in-law are sometimes found to live in such families with or without their dependent children. *Ghar jāmāi* or the resident son-in-law also lives in the home of his wife. Table 20 shows the various types of families with their percentages.

According to this Table simple or elementary type of 'A' category is 278, the percentage being 68.14. In this type of family 28 cases of widows with dependent children and 23 cases of spouses without issue have been included. 16 cases were found where the widow or widower lives alone. Out of 9 cases of elementary families, 'B' type of families are

TABLE 20

FAMILY TYPE

	(1)			(2)	(3)
Family	Simple or elementary family			Polygynous family	Joint or extended family
	(A) Parents and unmarried children	(B) Parents with old father or mother or divorced daughter without children	(C) Parents with the children of previous marriage		
Total 408	278	9	18	17	86
Percentage	68·14	2·2	4·41	4·16	21·08

found where old father or mother lives with their sons. In 2 cases (out of 9) divorced daughters were found to live with their parents, the percentage being 2.2. In the same way 'C' type simple families are 18 in all, the percentage being 4.41. In these families dependent children of the former union live with the step-father or step-mother.

The total number of polygynous families is 17 in which two wives live together with their respective children. Out of 17 families 5 wives (second) have been taken through regular marriage and 12 wives (second) through the 'Sanga' type of union. The percentage of this particular type of families is 4.16.

Joint or extended types of families are 86 in number of which parents with married children comprise 78 and in 4 cases resident sons-in-law are found to live with the fathers-in-law after marriage and in 4 cases widowed mothers-in-law with dependent children live with their sons-in-law, the percentage of such families being 21.08.

Lodha families are patrilineal. Other patriarchate features as are noticed in their residence which is virilocal in nature,

—concentration of authority and succession and inheritance laws—will be discussed elsewhere in this monograph. After marriage the wife goes to live in her husband's place. But a few cases, besides the 4 cases of resident sons-in-law mentioned earlier, were seen where a son-in-law settled in the village of his father-in-law. The Table below gives some typical examples.

TABLE 21

CHANGE OF RESIDENCE

Name	Birth place	Present residence
1. Srikanta Mallik	Birkar	Ma Mansa
2. Jaleswar Kotal	Khejurkuthi	Kasipur
3. Ram Kotal	Dihipur	Kukai
4. Mahendra Mallik	Hasimpur	Kukai
5. Khandu Mallik	Balarampur	Sankaridanga
6. Ratan Bhakta	Sankaridanga	Khejurkuthi (Kesiari P. S.)
7. Markunda Mallik	Sankaridanga	Sauri (Dantan P. S.)
8. Bantu Mallik	Sankaridanga	Khalgeria (Do).
9. Suren Ahari	Sankaridanga	Naldam (Nayagram P. S.)
10. Panchanan Mallik	Sankaridanga	Kakna (Do).
11. Abinash Digar	Kukai	Sankaridanga

The reasons for such settlement were variously expialned by the informants. According to some of them, the newly married girls generally do not like to go to their husbands' home. Naturally the poor persons who paid the bride price could not take an attitude of compulsion to force the parents to send their daughters to their places. As for the people who settled in the villages of their fathers-in-law, they did so mostly for easy availability of jobs there and other economic factors necessitating such change of residence. In almost all cases, these people have no property except one Ram Kotal of Kukai who has a little cultivable land in his own village.

Sometimes it is observed amongst the Lodhas that during the life-time of the father grown-up sons may continue to live together with their wives and children. But gradually these joint or extended families split up into elementary families. This is mainly due to economic factors as it is very difficult for a man of modest means to shoulder the responsibilities of the entire family or to forego his own conveniences for the sake of others. So they prefer to maintain individual families and shift for themselves after the death of the head of the family. Sometimes, some amongst the married brothers of a joint family also go to live in the villages of their wives' fathers which ultimately split up such extended families. It is only in rare cases amongst the Lodhas that three generations are seen to live together.

Within the family economic co-operation in daily life is maintained by all members. Generally, the father is the head of the family who manages the family affairs and allots specific duties and responsibilities to individual members in consultation with all the grown-up male and female members of the family. If the father dies, the eldest brother, provided he is an adult, or the widowed mother where the children are dependent, conducts the family affairs. Before purchasing a piece of cloth or other important articles of daily life, land, for borrowing of paddy or other things from the neighbours, all grown-up members, both male and female, are cousulted, a budget is prepared according to their suggestions and funds spent accordingly.

At times of quarrels or scandals spreading in the family, the elderly members are required to deal with the situation and in extreme cases, when these have reached public ears, co-villagers are informed and finally the case is placed before the panchayat for decision.

In marriage ceremonies parents and agnatic elder members are consulted and finally the village panchayat is informed. The paternal uncle is respected and his advice sought in many social and economic matters when the father is dead. The maternal uncle is also consulted, but not always, in marriage and funeral ceremonies. In case of death, family members, both near and distant, are informed. Co-villagers also participate in the funeral rites but only the persons related by blood observe mourning rituals after which a purificatory ceremony takes place terminating the death pollution.

Age and sex also demand special priviliges and respect from the younger members. Father and mother are always respected in the family. Children are brought up under the direct care of the parents and in case of a divorce, they live with the mother. Thus a relation of affectionate bond exists among them. In many families a father or a mother is seen occasionally to bring different kinds of sweets etc. for their children. Often children are carried on the back by the mother or the father to the fairs or festivals or to the market. Inspite of a hard day's work, they look after their children with special care. But this relation changes with the age of the children and their sex. Grown-up boys and girls help their parents by keeping the young children under their care while their parents are engaged in domestic work or other important callings.

A son is preferred to a daughter, because he is expected to help his parents by physical labour and money at the time when they would fall into difficulties or grow old. Yet girls are not less welcomed. When a girl gradually attains puberty, it is the mother who keeps constant watch over her movements and chastity. The grown-up girls are not allowed to move freely without a senior female member, mother, grandmother, sisters or aunt accompanying her. Gradually the grown-up daughters become helpers in the daily domestic duties of their mothers.

In Kukai, Sankaridanga, Daharpur and Birkar, the boys are now sent to schools. It is the fathers who have been taking the initiative in the programme for imparting education to their children. This sort of zeal for education is not at all found among the Lodha women.

Gradually the grown-up boys help their fathers in agricultural operations and other economic activities. They also show more respect to the father than to the mother. After marriage daughters are expected to leave the parental homes and the daughters-in-law come in their places. But they have to play an important role in the economic life of the family, besides performing the usual domestic duties. If quarrels and other domestic difficulties crop up after the marriage of a girl, the daughter-in-law generally flees to her parental village and after some time chooses a life-mate for herself in another person. Sometimes a married son settles in the village of his father-in-law or shifts to a separate establishment in the same village, apart from his father.

In a family the husband and the wife have a significant mission to fulfil. Custom enjoins that none of the spouses should utter the name of the other but should be addressed directly as 'father or mother of such and such.' They are not only sex partners but partners in economic life too. Specially in Jhargram areas where they have to collect faggots or other jungle produce, they go to work jointly, husband and wife together, to collect such articles and sell them in the market. But the important items of the day-to-day budget are discussed between the husband and the wife before making the purchases, while the major domestic activities, including lactation of children, are the domain of a mother. In the agricultural areas, the housewife sometimes goes to the field to work as a hired labour to earn some wages. They have the liberty to spend a part of their personal earnings in amusements and refreshments such as for consumption of a little rice beer or betel leaves and nuts etc. On the occasions of fairs and festivals, husbands are seen to take deep interest in the purchase of new saris or other petty articles of toilet of daily use.

The lives of the criminals amongst these people do not largely deviate from the normal course. The males generally commit a crime. When they are arrested, the burden of the whole family devloves on the wife for the purposes of care and maintenance of the children, if they are minor. In a few cases, the wives of the criminals defended their husbands as innocent and spotless in character. They strongly asserted that they knew nothing wrong about their husbands.

Grandfather, grandmother and other older persons of a family are paid due respect by the younger generation. The nature of grand-parent grand-child relationship is full of affection. They sometimes cut jokes, speak vulgar words to them and sometimes treat them with folk tales, ghost stories, folk songs, etc.

Other members of the family like the paternal uncle or aunt is also respected like one's own father or mother if they are fairly older in age than the nephews. Elder brother is highly esteemed by the wife of the younger brother and the custom is that they should not talk to each other or the younger brother's wife should not expose her limbs or head in front of him knowingly or unknowingly. Reversely a jocular ralation exists between the elder brother's wife and the younger brother, and a few people were found to marry the wives of their deceased elder brothers. In the same way, the sisters or younger brothers of the wife could be treated jocosely by a man. In any case, the mother-in-law is respected like one's own mother. Relation between a woman and her husband's sister is also full of affection where parity of age plays a significant role in minor domestic activities and duties.

Other relatives are also welcomed and in many cases special dishes are arranged for their reception. Young folks are addressed by name by the older generations and relatives are addressed with the definite terms of addresses which are more or less akin to the local Bengali terms of addresses.

Villages form important social units with territorial boundary where the families of different clans foster mutual relations in many socio-religious or economic activities. It has been described how the Lodhas maintain their solidarity in a village distinct from other castes and communities. But inter-family relationship among the Lodhas are traced in many villages where they retain the feeling of group consciousness or individuality even though living in close proximity with the other higher castes and communities. In many villages, again. they are found to enjoy a common festival with other communities, specially the depressed or scheduled castes, when this feeling of exclusiveness fades away altogether.

Ceremonial friends or artificial kins

It has already been stated that ceremonial friendship or forms of artificial relationship are not uncommon among the Lodhas. Members of various castes or communities generally came in contact with those people when those relations are forged. These ceremonial relations play an important part in social life and thus make the inter-caste relations or co-operation more easy and lasting. There are several types of these relationship which can he summarised as

(a) Ceremonial friends,
(b) Father-son/ daughter relationship,
(c) Mother-son/ daughter relationship,
(d) Ceremonial son or daughter, and
(e) Ceremonial brother or sister.

Sometimes these relationships are solemnized on a festive day or these take place in fairs or markets. There are a few examples of this type. Ganesh Digar of Daharpur established a ceremonial friendship on the day of *Makar Sankrānti* i.e. on the last day of Paush (December-January) when a local fair took place on that occasion. The friendship was established with a non-Lodha named Hiru Dolai who is a Namasudra by caste. They developed such a friendship for more or less common physical features shared by them. In respect of details of the ceremonies, a few articls are required like a new wooden bead necklace, and a red cord for the waist called *ghunsi*. During the ceremony these are exchanged between the participants and the wooden bead necklace is tied round their necks and the *ghunsi* cords round their waists. Sometimes new pieces of cloth are exchanged or presented by the parties. On festive days and at the time of festivals the friends invite each other. Some presentations are made during the period of pollution too. *Makar* friendship are also found among women of the Lodhas. These are celebrated with rituals.

In many parts of Jhargram Sub-division and in some parts of Sadar Sub-division of Midnapur where *Tusu* festival is celebrated this type of *Tusu* friendships are generally solemnised specially among the Lodha women. In the same way ceremonial son/daughter, father/mother relationships are very common which take place not only among the members of the same community but also with members of castes, like Kayasthas, Mahishyas etc. Lodha-Munda relations or relationship with the other tribals are also in vogue.

These artificial kinships help to foster a new relationship in their social fabric which ultimately tone down the social resistance or group hostility to some extent.

Marriage

Marriage is the basis of elementary family and a new relationship or alliance is forged between two families in its ultimate course. After marriage economic partnership is formed between the husband and wife in a family.

Marriage Prohibition

Cross-cousin and parallel-cousin marriages are not found till now anywhere in the Lodha territory. But it was said by some Lodha informants during interview that such marriages did not lead to violation of the taboo. The deceased younger brother's wife should not be married by the elder brother. No jocular or frivolous relationship was found to exist between the *Bhāsur* or the husband's elder brother and the younger brother's wife. Rather, the elder brother is respectfully avoided by her. Marriage proposals of these types are never encouraged by them.

Child marriage is not uncommon where the age of the bride varies from 10 to 12 and that of the bridegroom from 15 to 25. Most of the marriage unions are settled at the developed age (15-20 years), when the girl attains puberty. This is the orthodox type of marriage and is called *Bibāha.* Negotiations for such marriages are conducted by a person who acts as a go-between amongst the parties and places such proposals before the parents or guardians of the marriagable boys and girls of different families. Then formal visits and return visits are paid by both the parties of the bride and the bridegroom with a view to finalising such marriages. At the final stage a bride price is settled. Twenty years ago this bride price was about rupees seven to eleven. At present this price is about rupees twenty-five to forty-five with the usual presentation of some cloths to the bride's family and ornaments to the bride, if the bridegroom's family is economically well off. The bride price is received by the bride's mother before the wedding ceremony. The wedding ceremony consists of a series of rites and rituals the details of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 22 shows the different modes of marriage prevailing amongst the Lodhas of Midnapur.

In most of the cases of regular marriage, the consent of the bride or the bridegroom was taken when they were fully grown up. There were 24 cases of marriage without any bride price, formally paid to the brides' families. Marriage by mutual consent or love marriage is also found in the Lodha society, the total number of cases at the time of investigation being 5. Where the bride and the bridegroom have developed intimacy, it leads to such a marriage. In such cases bride price is not paid by the bridegroom's party but they offer the usual presents of several cloths to the bride's family.

TABLE 22

MODES OF MARRIAGE CONTRACT

Total No. of cases	Bride price	Sanga	Without bride price	Mutual consent or love marriage.	Ghar Jāmāi	Service	Exchange	Sorrorate
476	385	55	24	5	4	1	1	1
Percentage.	80·88	11·55	5·04	1·05	0·84	0·21	0·21	0·21

In Jaralata, Keshab Bhakta's son-in-law live in his house as he has no son. Such a son-in-law is designated by the term 'Ghar Jāmāi' or resident son-in-law. In such cases the bridegrooms are generally very poor and cannot afford to pay the bride price or to bear the marriage expenditure. In Kultikri, there are three more cases of resident sons-in-law.

In Kasipur, Jaleswar Kotal has selected a young man as bridegroom for his daughter on condition that he will work for his household for two years before marriage. This is an exceptional case of 'marriage by service'. The bridegroom is an extremely poor man.

In another case, Rabin Lodha of Jaralata may be said to have married by exchange. His father arranged such marriage of his daughter Hemangini and son Rabin with the son and daughter of a neighbour on the basis of mutual exchange. The marriagable daughters of the two families were accepted as daughters-in-law mutually by either and no bride price was paid for this.

Levirate is permissible in the Lodha society but not obligatory; only 3 such cases were found during the survey: one at Radhanagar where the wife of the deceased elder brother was married by the younger brother Nitai; one at Metial where Biku Kotal married his deceased elder brother's wife and another at Kultikri. These are termed as *Sāngā* and a formal royalty to the village panchayat is paid by the deceased's younger brother. The younger brothers in those cases were found to be bachelors. But there is no compulsion on the part of a man to marry the widow of the deceased elder brother.

Sorrorate is also permissible and only one case at Kasipur was found where Banku Layek married the two daughters of Srimanta of Dihipur. Both the wives live jointly in a household.

Divorce

Divorce is freely practised in the Lodha society. No formal intimation or ceremony is required to be given or performed for a divorce. Adultery and indolence on the part of a wife are generally the two main factors which lead to divorce. A wife cannot formally divorce her husband, but she can refuse to live with her husband on the same grounds. This is generally done by the women in two ways. Either the wife does not come back to her husband's house once she has gone to the house of her parents or she deserts her husband. It is generally reported that the causes that lead to such a course of action being taken by a married woman is the ill-treatment she receives from the parents of the bridegroom, compulsion to do hard manual work and other forms of oppression, the accounts of which when narrated, are naturally believed by the parents out of filial affection and impel them not to send their daughters back to their husbands' places again. It is true that in her family, the Lodha woman has to work very hard with her husband in the field and for collection of firewood from the jungles or other minor forest produce. This, coupled with other drudgeries and unsympathetic treatment results in a strong tension which can partially be relieved by seeking a divorce. In every case of divorce, the general complaint of the wife is the alleged ill-treatment meted out by the bridegroom's family. Another cause of divorce is that a bride of tender age being immature in sex, naturally finds it difficult to compromise herself with the immediate demands of a sexually matured husband. There were altogether 43 cases of divorce recorded during the investigation—11 males and 32 females of different age groups, living separately.

When such a divorced wife is remarried, this marriage contract is called *Sāngā*. Which is less costly and the rites of the usual marriage ceremony are performed in this case. Only the permission of the village headman is sought and the consent of the bride is secured and at last a subscription or royalty is paid to the village council known as *Grām Mānya*. This is a fixed amount of Rs. 1.25 nP. only on payment of which the Sāngā is recognised and the wife is taken by the husband to his house. There are no elaborate ceremonies associated with this type of marriage.

Widow remarriage is also called *Sāngā*. The levirate, where the younger brother has the sexual right or marriage right over the wife of the deceased elder brother, is performed with the usual payment of royalty to the village council of the bridegroom's village and is also called *Sāngā*. After the *Sāngā* the wife is called *Sāngāli Bau* or the wife of Sāngā marriage and she has an inferior status in the family as well as in the society. If the wife of the usual marriage is alive and both the Sāngāli and the married wives live in the same domicile, the married wife gets a superior status as was noticed in Nayagram, Narayangarh and Kesiari Police Station areas.

Besides the usual wife and wife of the *Sāngā* marriage, there is also a form of concubinage. There the person does not pay any royalty to the village council or any bride price. The woman (she may be a divorced wife or a widow), is treated as wife with an inferior status. She is kept separately. The woman in such cases is called *Rākhāli Bāu* or kept wife. There are several cases of this kind in Dihipur and Birkar. In one case at Kultikri the Rākhāli wife is found to live with her lover after the death of his former wife.

After marriage, a new relationship is established between the two families of the bride and the bridegroom living in the same village or two different villages. This involves some duties and privileges for both the parties and requires some social observances like visits and counter-visits by members of the two families once or more annually with some presents.

CHAPTER V

LIFE CYCLE

Information on birth and pregnancy was collected from the report of personal experiences of a large number of Lodha women of different ages distributed in 31 villages in the district of Midnapur. These were later checked and collated. In many cases, midwives of *Dhāis* and medicinemen were also approched and their statements recorded. The medicinemen elaborated the system of treatment which is generally adopted in such cases.

Stoppage of menstruation is taken as the sign of pregnancy. Gradually the outer symptoms of pregnancy are noticed in the individual. Jiten, a medicineman of Kukai, expressed the opinion that the desire for choicest meals increases at this stage, as the baby inside the womb feels the need of nourishment. Women generally dislike sexual intercourse with their husbands during advanced stages of pregnancy. Sorasi, wife of Rabin of Jaralata, corroborated this view. It is desirable on the part of a woman that she should rather perform light works like collection of firewood, cooking, etc. during pregnancy, instead of heavy work. Even so, the writer found that a few women in their advanced stage of pregnancy had to go to the paddy field or to the market with faggots on their heads.

Besides the ban on hard manual work, there are a few other restrictions or taboos which have to be observed by a pregnant woman. These are enforced almost in all the areas of the Lodha territory as cited below.

1) Fish caught in a basket trap should not be taken by any pregnant woman. The popular belief amongst the Lodhas is that, if a pregnant woman eats these fishes, the baby in her womb will feel panicky and lingering pains like

that suffered by these fishes may affect her and delivery may be difficult.

2) Fishes caught by hook are also strictly forbidden at this stage lest the baby in the womb should die of similar pain before delivery.

3) The pregnant woman will not be allowed to sew torn pieces of cloth with a needle. She should not pass the thread through the eye of the needle, lest the baby is born blind.

4) Unholy places like a cremation ground should not be treaded by a pregnant woman. The popular belief again is that ghosts or evil spirits generally reside in such places and the baby may fall a victim to them and consequently die in the womb. If she has to travel to a distant place, a male member or some elderly women must accompany her.

Besides these restrictions, the guardians of the pregnant women observe *Mānasiks* or take vows to offer fruits, goats or fowl as sacrifices to the local deities for the safety of the baby and the mother and a trouble-free delivery.

Forecast of sex of the baby is generally made according to the Lodha beliefs on the fifth month of pregnancy.

At the time of delivery, generally a *Hāḍi* woman, one of the 'untouchable' castes, is asked to serve as midwife. There is practically no provision for setting apart a confinement room because the majority of the Lodhas have got a single-room small hut without any additional space to arrange for the purpose. But in rare cases, a few Lodhas have two or more apartments in their huts, one of which could be spared for confinement. Such cases were found only in the villages Kukai, Dihipur, Birkar and Benadubi.

In a particular delivery case concerning Panchami, wife of Brindaban Mallik of Kukai, a midwife of the Hāḍi caste was called in from Gaganeswar, a neighbouring village to attend the expectant mother. She began to feel gradual the intensity of labour pain and every sign of an impending delivery became apparent. A mat and a brass pot filled with water were kept near the expectant mother. Some elderly women of the locality had also been called to help her before the midwife came. When the pain was very acute, she broke into loud cries; the midwife massaged some cocoanut oil on her abdomen to soften and cool the skin. After a few minutes a successful delivery took place.

In serious cases, medicine men are sent for as expectant mothers are generally thought to be spirit-possessed. The medicine man makes a sort of performance locally known as *Telpānjā* or 'oil divination' to ascertain if the woman is possessed by an evil spirit or not. If, as a result of this divination, spirit possession is detected, he first vows to offer a fowl in sacrifice to the deity *Barām* and gradually makes more offers extending upto a number of goat sacrifices at a time.

Panchami gave birth to a female child and her mother-in-law and the midwife poured cold water on the baby from the brass pot previously kept there for the purpose. Then the water was soaked by means of a torn piece of white clean cloth and the baby was laid on a bed prepared for it on a mat over which several pieces of folded cloth—one cubit either way—were kept in the pattern of a small quilt. No efforts were spared to make the bed soft and suitable for the baby. The midwife then instructed Panchami to contract her muscles in the zone of the uterus in such a way that after the child-birth it might not come out abruptly. The midwife cut the umbilical cord by a sharp bamboo slip above one or two inches from the navel of the baby and then tied it by a thread. After a while the plecenta came out of the womb and was kept aside. This heap of plecenta was then taken away by the midwife in an earthen pot, the mouth of which was covered with an earthen plate and was buried in the ground in the south-west corner of the lying-in room. Panchami was then directed to cleanse the blood stains from her body. The floor where the child was born was cleansed by the midwife with a solution of earth, cowdung and water already prepared by the mother-in-law. In the meantime, the news was received by the male members waiting in the verandah outside and a man was sent for the barber and a washerman. On coming of the former, the nails of the baby and her mother were pared off and all but the baby and her mother took bath. The barber was paid Re. 1/- and the midwife Rs. 2/- with one seer (approx. 2 lbs.) of rice as remuneration. The cloths were handed over to the washerman who would wash them at his house and return them the next day for which he would have to be paid Rs. 2/- The mother-in-law was busy in the kitchen room which was also to be cleansed and the whole set of earthen cooking utensils had to be thrown away at a fixed place called *Hānripāriā* (a place for disposing of unclean pots) where evil spirits are said to live. She also took bath. Some kerosene oil was sprinkled over the floor of the lying-in room to destroy the bad smell in it. One *Kājalpātā* or receptecle for collyrium prepared with mustard oil and lamp black, was kept on the bed of the child. This day is called *Sājlatā.* i.e. the day of child birth. On this day the mother took nothing except a little hot water and the baby was fed with two or three drops of honey.

2nd day: New earthen pots for cooking were used from the second day of the child birth. Panchami was given hot rice gruel without salt to eat. This diet continued for seven days and the baby was fed with its mother's milk from this day.

3rd day: On the third day the mother was given a little mustard oil to massage her body, and hot water was served for her sponging which she did in her lying-in room. She was not allowed to move and kept lying on the bed.

After seven days she took rice and curry but neither fish nor meat. Occasionally soaked rice was given to her in the afternoon for stimulating lactation. No other dietary restriction was observed here after. Twenty-one days from birth are, however, considered as the 'unclean' period.

21st day: On the twenty-first day, called *Ekushiā*, certain purificatory measures had to be observed again. The barber and the washerman were called as usual at Brindaban's house. The former had to pare off the nails of the baby as well as of its mother. The other members of the family also got their nails pared off by the barber and took their bath thereafter. Again the cooking pots were thrown into the Hānripariā. A few clan members were invited and entertained on that day according to custom. The barber was paid Re. 1/-, the washerman Rs. 2/- and a piece of used cloth, and the midwife only one seer of rice, Thus the ceremony was over.

Lodhas do not observe a special day for the selection of a name for the new-born child. The baby born to Panchami was simply called 'Khuki'.

During the period of pollution or thereafter, there was no shortage of milk in the mother's breast and she was allowed to visit any house in the vicinity.

No hair-cutting ceremony was held till the baby attained the age of six months.

To deal with more serious troubles in some cases of deliveries, medicine men are called in and the methods they adopt in ascertaining the causes effecting aggravation have already been indicated. A concrete example is however cited below, Panchami, wife of Nanku Paramanik, aged 28, of Saldanga, had gived birth to a male child. This being her first issue, she was carefully treated by her family members. She had to observe all restrictions on food and movement, but even then had unfortunately to suffer terrible pains continually for four days before delivery. On the second day of her troubles Jiten of Kukai, the medicine man, was called, in. He was given five annas (0,31 nP.), three betel leaves and three betel-nuts as fee. He invoked some *Veers* or heroes of the past and begged their favour. Then he gave a little magically potential water to Panchami to drink and applied a few blows on her ears in order to drive away the evil spirit possessing her. He repeated the same method every day and on the fourth day she safely gave birth to a male child.

In Rangtia, one woman named Susum, aged 28, wife of Bijoy Dandapat was suffering from shortage of breast milk when her second son was just one month old. Here also the same medicine man, Jiten was called in. He applied his magical blows on the ears of the baby who was taken to be spirit-possessed and the mother was directed to take rice with starch but without salt. It is reported that he was thus able to counteract the mischievous intentions of the supposed witch who was tormenting the child.

In Daharpur and Kajla under Narayangarh Police station, one Umesh Kotal has a wide practice of such magical arts. He is said to be a specialist in cases of delivery which he tackles by invoking the *Veers* or heroes. He also treats miscellaneous diseases with this secret art. He accepts remunerations from annas eight (0.50 nP.) with a seer of rice to Rs. 15/- according to the nature of the case and the financial condition of the party.

Rice-Feeding Ceremony

This ceremony was observed by the writer in Kukai when Panchami's child first took rice. Children are generally suckled till they are six months old. At the end of six months, the day for feeding of rice is fixed on a Tuesday, any Tuesday being held auspicious. To observe this ceremonial day, a barber is called in to shave the baby. The village priest of the same community also attends and secures the following articles to prepare a *Bhog* or *Kṣhir* as the sacred offering to the deity.

(i) One seer of milk,
(ii) Coarse sugar,
(iii) Sun-dried rice, half-a-seer,
(iv) A few pieces of ginger,
(v) One new earthen pot.

Early in the morning after bath the village priest, Maheswar, went to the shrine of goddess *Sitalā* with the above articles. He cooked these in a newly purchased earthen pot and made a gruel which he offered to the deity and uttered some sacred formula praying for the sound health and longevity of the baby. He took a little water from a pot which is thought to be the permanent symbol of Goddess Sitalā, and scattered it on the Kṣhir or sacred offering, the gruel. Brindaban and his younger brother and sisters were all present there. After the offering was made, the village priest bowed his head before the goddess and others followed suit. Then he handed over the Kṣhir to Brindaban. By this time the barber had finished shaving the baby's head. A little turmeric paste mixed with mustard oil was generally rubbed over the body of the child before she had a bath, and a red thread was hung round her waist. A necklace of wooden beads was also hung round her neck. However she did not wear any new cloth. The mother of Brindaban put just a little gruel or Kṣhir, a porridge of rice, milk and sugar, into the little mouth of the baby. Some relatives were entertained in a feast that day.

At Jaralata, Sashi, aged 28, wife of Nadia told a story of child-birth in vogue there differing on some minor points. The midwife of the Hāḍi caste cut the umbilical cord with a sharpened piece of shell instead of a sharp slip of bamboo used in the above case. The placenta was interred in the same room where the child was born near the door, whereas in the former case it was buried into the ground in the south-west corner of the room. On that day no barber pared off the nails. The new mother was given a little rice beer and then some gruel. On the third day she took bath. On the 21st day the barber came. On the ceremonial rice-feeding day she herself fed the baby on its attaining the age of six months. They did not go to the village priest for sanction. No feast was given to the caste community members.

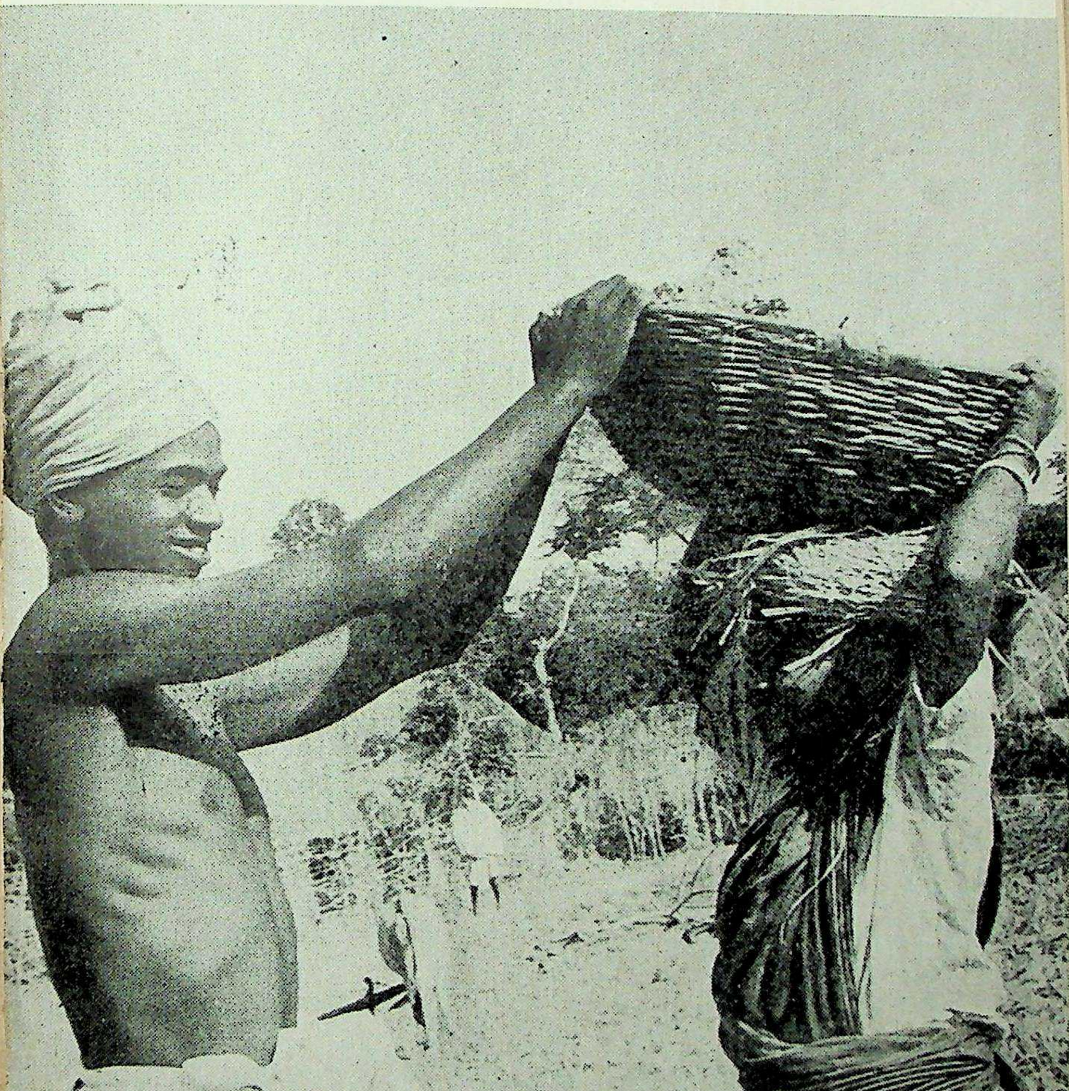

Plate No. 3 : Man and woman sharing in the day's labour.

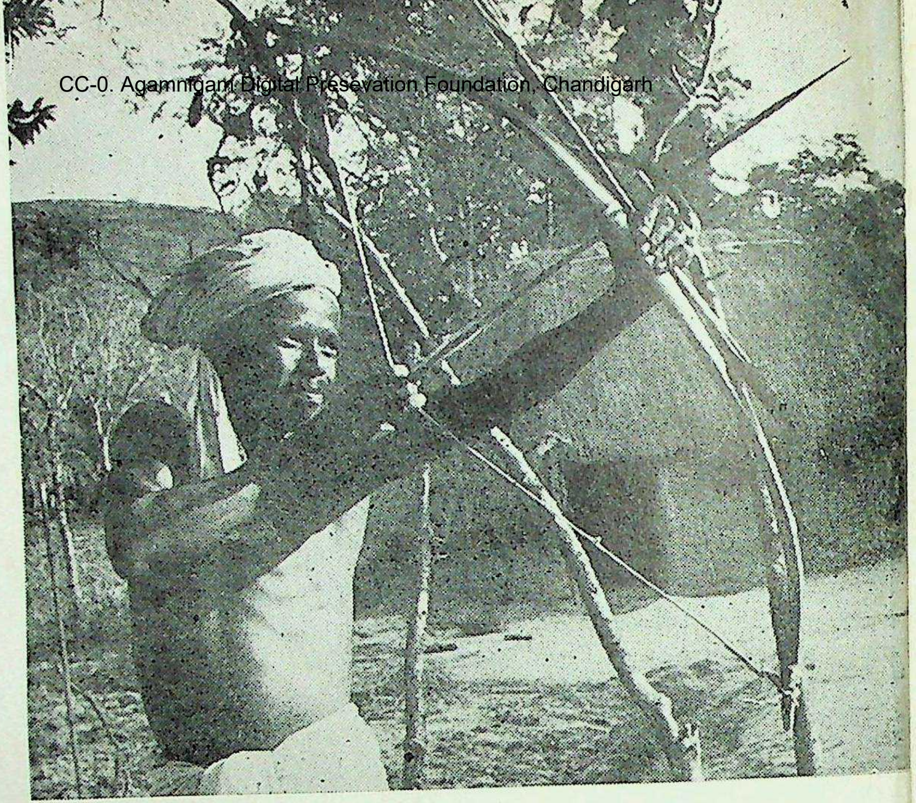

Plate No. 4 :
A Lodha
with bow
and arrows.

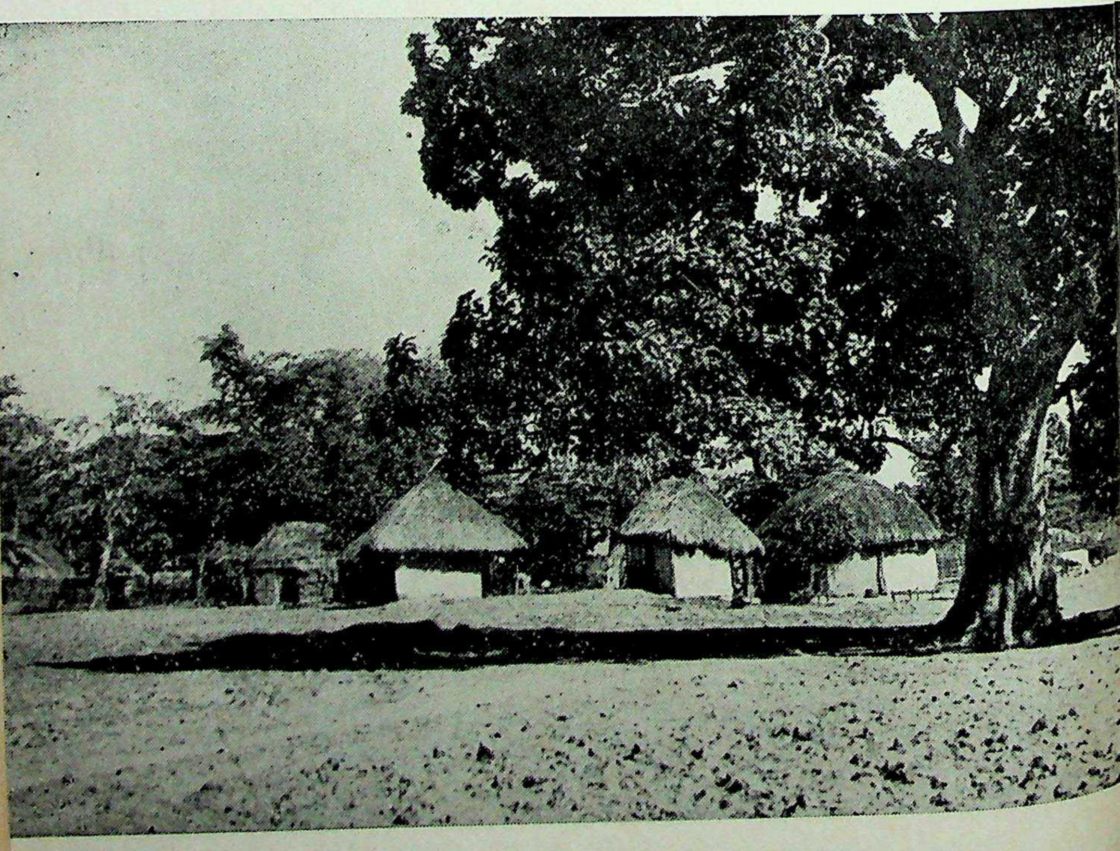

Plate No. 5 : A Lodha Village in Nayagram

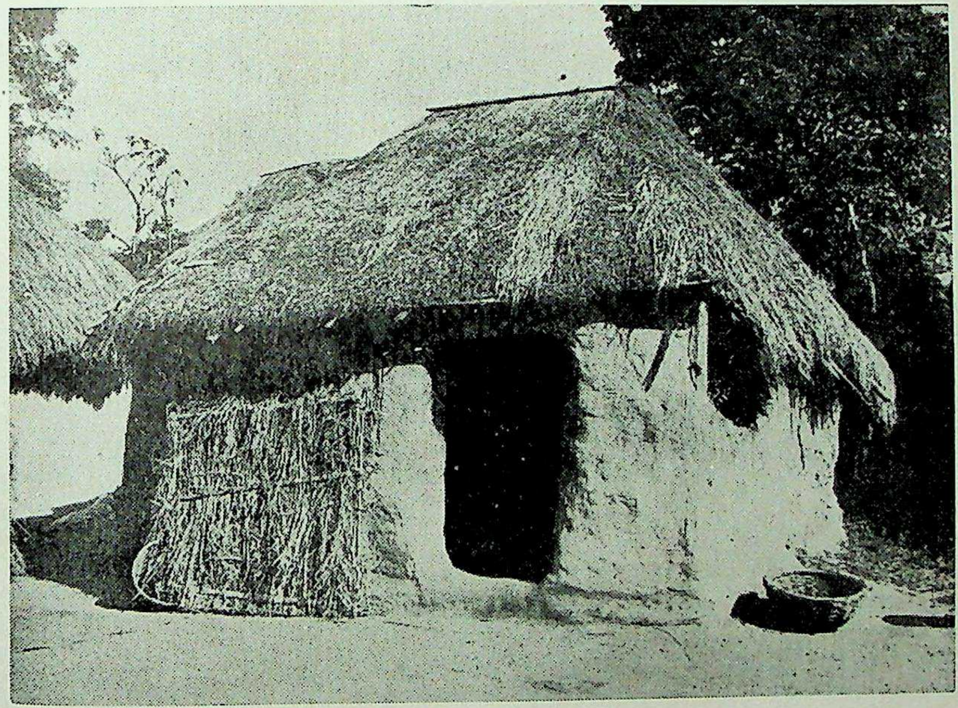

Plate No 6 : A Lodha hut with adjustable shutter for the door.

Plate No 7 : A newly married Lodha woman in her parental home.

In Ma-Mansa, Bhuban Kotal took several holy articles to the Barām's place through the village priest before the ceremonial feeding of his child. The articles containing sun-dried rice, coarse sugar and milk, were offered by the priest to Barām Chandi, a mighty goddess there. The priest then gave back all these articles to Bhuban who made arrangements for their cooking in his own house. A gruel was prepared of the admixture and it was given to the new-born baby of Bhuban. Bhuban's wife's brother was present then.

At Balarampur, one Bijay aged 25, consulted an astrologer of the Vaishnava sect for selection of an auspicious day for the first ceremonial rice-feeding of his child. The astrologer gave him detailed instructions but took nothing as remuneration. Kṣhir or gruel containing rice, coarse sugar and milk, was prepared in his own house and an old woman neighbour named Rajabala was called in to feed the baby with a little of this first ceremonial rice.

It is reported by Rajabala that the day of the first rice-feeding is selected by an astrologer. In the case of a male child an auspicious day is selected when the baby attains the age of six months but in the case of a female child such date is fixed when she is seven months old. A barber is called in to crop the hair and to pare off the nails of the baby and paid a few annas as fee.

One Kamini Ahari, aged 55, the wife of Kumad of the same village said that a man of the Vaishnava sect may sometimes be requested to give some holy water which is fed first before the feeding of the rice gruel.

It is important to note here that in the jungle areas where the Lodhas live in isolation or in the midst of other tribal people like the Santals, they observe very little restrictions and rituals of a complex nature, But the complexity of the rituals is more pronounced amongst the agrarian Lodhas of Kesiari, Khargpur, Dantan and Narayangarh where they live in the close proximity of other Hindu caste groups.

The Lodhas perform a series of rites and rituals in connection with their marriage ceremony. A detailed description of a few cases is given below.

Each marriage ceremony is linked with a chain of rituals performed in minute details on the occasion. Generally, there are five or six important phases in such a ceremony. Again these are associated with other elaborate rituals. These may be summed up as follows:—

(1) *Negotiation* in which marriage proposals are placed to the bride as well as the bridegroom by a go-between or some elderly relation of the prospective couple.

(2) *Preliminaries*:

(i) Selection of bride;
(ii) fixation of bride price and its payment;
(iii) fixation of the date of marriage called *lagan* and its formal intimation;
(iv) reception or welcoming of *lagan* articles and confirmation of the date of marriage.

(3) *Wedding preparations*:

(i) *Gāi-halud* or anointment of turmeric paste and ceremonial bath and worship;
(ii) erection of a wedding booth or *Chhāmṛā*;
(iii) construction of an earthen platfrom or altar;
(iv) starting of the wedding procession;
(v) dressing of the bridegroom and of the *Sambar*—the chief conductor of the ceremony;
(vi) *Kulimāther* or reception.

(4) *Ceremony proper*:

(i) tying of turban or the wedding knot;
(ii) ceremonial removing of the couple and their feeding.

(5) *Send-off to the party and the bride*:

(i) starting for the bridegroom's village and reception there;

(ii) blocking the way of entrance or *Bātgherā*;
(iii) wearing of the iron bangle by the bridegroom or *Khāṛu-Parāno*;
(iv) undoing the wedding knot and the sacred thread on the wrist of the groom;
(v) throwing away the basket, and ceremonial bathing;
(vi) presentation to the couple or *Bāndhāpan*;
(vii) auspicious eighth day and return of the bride.

(6) *Remarriage or Punarbibāha*:

Punarbibāha is arranged when marriage takes place at the tender age of the bride. Otherwise a few rituals are performed on the wedding day as described later on. All these rituals take a few days, say, about a month to complete.

Case No. 1

This particular case deals with the marriage of a Lodha named Sashi of Tetala. Sashi is now 28 years of age. His clan is Bhakta (*Bara*). His wife's name is Champa. Her father's clan is Mallik. She is about 24 years old. Sashi's father Kanto is 50 years old. He has another son named Banka. Sashi is the eldest. When marriage proposals came from his father and other relatives, he gave his consent to the seeking of a suitable bride. After a few days' effort, Sashi's mother's brother succeeded in arranging a marriage. Sashi's uncle (younger brother of his father) Dula, went to Chandrapur, Jhargram, where the bride's family lived.

The Preliminaries

As soon as Dula and Sashi's mother's brother reached the bride's place, they were given a hearty reception. They reached there in the afternoon. A palm-leaf mat was spread on the ground for the guests. Water was supplied by the female members to wash their feet. Several elderly men of the bride's village assembled there. There was discussion about Sashi and his family. At the end of the discussion the bridegroom's party decided to pay ten rupees as the bride price. Before their departure a feast was given and rice beer was served as drink. The party now invited the bride's father to come to Sashi's place in return and then left for their own village before sunset.

After a few days the bride's father and two other relatives came to the bridegroom's house. A return feast was given to them. After another few days, Dula with the bridegroom's mother's brother went to the bride's place and paid ten rupees as the bride price. This sum was received by the bride's mother. She produced one brass plate and Dula placed the money on it. A few villagers were also present there. Dula took his meal there and came back.

The day of wedding was fixed by the family members. No astrologer was consulted in this case. The date was fixed by the elderly members of the families concerned, on one Tuesday in the month of Phālgun (February-March). It was reported by some of the informants that Tuesday was the most appropriate day for marriage. The birthday is avoided both in the case of the bride and the groom. If the birthday happens to be a Tuesday, the next alternative is Friday. Besides Phālgun (February-March), Vaisakh (April-May) and Jaistha (May-June) are considered propitious for the wedding ceremony.

The formal intimation of the scheduled date and time or *lagan* for the marriage was conveyed to the bride's house on the fifth day preceding the marriage. On that particular date Sashi's father's sister went to the bride's house with the following articles:—

(i) Five pieces of turmeric,
(ii) five spoonfuls of mustard oil,
(iii) one new red thread for the waist called *Chābāki* or *ghunshi*,
(iv) one *mālā* or wooden bead necklace.

All these things were carried in the new earthen pot. Dula also accompanied her.

When they reached the bride's house, the bride's mother came out to receive them. She held a brass plate in her hand, containing several unhusked grains of rice and *durbā* grass (Cynoden dactylon). She sprinkled all these things upon the earthen pot brought from Sashi's house. This ceremony is called *Chumāi* (kissing or the welcoming ceremony). Later on, the bride's mother took the pot and placed it inside the house. The party was given a feast without meat. After the feast they returned home.

Wedding Preparations

Sashi's father's sister returned to the bridegroom's house and the arrangement for anointing with turmeric paste was made. Turmeric paste was applied at first to the forehead of the bride-groom by his father's brother's wife. Gradually the whole body was anointed. Then the bride-groom was made to take a bath. The same operation was repeated for five successive days in the evening at both the bride's and bridegroom's houses. During this period Sashi was very careful to avoid any danger, for instance, he avoided going to the jungle.

On the day of marriage a temporary shed called *māṛoā* or *chhāmrā* was erected in the courtyard of the bride's house. Four posts of *sāl* were erected and these were covered by means of *sāl* or *māhuā* branches, Palm-leaf mats were spread on the ground beneath the canopy. A similar shed was erected in the courtyard of the bridegroom's house.

One small earthen altar or platform called *bedi* was also constructed from the earth dug up from near the root of the *sidhā* (Lagerstramia parviflora) tree. The earth had been dug up by means of a hoe. The bridegroom's sister's husband who led the marriage ceremony gave three strokes on the ground for this purpose. The sister's husband of the bride-groom who was in the party performed the part of the leader in the marriage ceremony. He is known as the *Sambar*. In many cases he is assisted by the *Deheri* or village priest. In this particular marriage the Sambar was also presented a new piece of cloth by the bridegroom.

On the altar two newly purchased earthen pitchers filled with water were placed with two mango twigs on their mouths. The pitchers were placed on the earthen platform just on the eve of the wedding procession. Vermilion marks were applied to the pitchers.

Sashi took his meal cooked in a newly purchased earthen pot. The meal consisted of rice and gruel boiled with *guṛ* or coarse sugar. No salt was mixed with it. The bride also took a similar meal in her parent's house.

The wedding party consisted of (i) Sashi (bridegroom); (ii) Sashi's father's mother (Rukha); (iii) Sambar—Sashi's sister's husband; (iv) Sashi's father's brother (Dula); (v) Sashi's mother's brother; (vi) there were three others persons from the village of Sashi.

The following articles were taken by the party to the bride's place. These were kept in a newly purchased basket which was carried by Sashi's father's mother.

(i) *Sālā dhuti*—a piece of cloth for bride's brother (9 cubits long).

(ii) *Mā Sāṛi*—one piece of cloth for the bride's mother (10 cubits long).

(iii) *Māmā dhuti*—a piece of cloth for the bride's mother's brother (9 cubits long).

(iv) *Kone sāṛi*—a piece of cloth for the bride (10 cubits long).

(v) Cash money for (a) brother, (b) washerman, (c) foster-mother, (d) village maidens or bride's sister, (e) village priest or headman.

Sashi first dressed his hair and anointed it with plenty of hair oil. He put on a new piece of cloth, a shirt and a turban called *pāllā* on his head. One mango leaf was tied by means of a thread on the right wrist of Sashi. This was done by the Sambar. The bridegroom also wore a wooden bead necklace and a red thread round his waist.

The wedding party started at noon. They also took one kerosene lantern with them. The party including the bridegroom went on foot.

The villagers including some relatives of the bride were on the look-out for the bridegroom's party. When they came in sight, several elderly members of the bride's village advanced to receive them. When the party arrived at the bride's house, water was brought for washing their feet, after which mats were offered for their seat. This is known as *Kuli māther* or reception. Then the bridegroom's father's mother who was in the party, was requested to go inside the hut with her basket. The bride was presented with the new *sāṛi*. The other pieces of cloths were presented to the relatives for whom they had been brought. Then the bride was taken to the shed by her father's sister.

Ceremony Proper

The Sambar now asked the bridegroom to sit on the mat facing east. The bride was seated in front of the bridegroom. Two persons held a piece of cloth between the bride and the bridegroom according to the direction of the Sambar. The Sambar tied the turban of the bridegroom with the corner of the cloth of the bride and both the bride and the bridegroom touched vermilion on each other's forehead. The village priest was present there. They prayed to god for the happiness and prosperity of the couple. The screen was removed and the bride was then made to sit on the left side of the groom by the Sambar. The ceremony then ended.

Inside the hut there was a palm-leaf mat spread on the floor. The couple were now taken inside by two young men. They sat on the mat facing east. A quantity of rice and gruel boiled with coarse sugar was served to the bridegroom in a brass plate. After the bridegroom had eaten the food, the bride was served with a fresh quantity of the same food on the same plate without cleansing it.

During the night the couple were to remain in this hut and they were not allowed to go outside. That night a feast was given to the bridegroom's party and some notable persons of the village belonging to the same community.

Send-off of the bride and their reception at groom's village

On the next morning, the bride and bridegroom saluted the elderly persons of the village and also the relatives, and started for their home. A cart was arranged for this purpose. The couple including the groom's party were seated in it.

When the cart reached the bridegroom's house, the newly married pair were received by the bridegroom's mother who directed them to sit under shed on a mat. Sashi's mother gave the couple a little coarse sugar in a brass cup and water to drink.

The married couple were now taken within the house. As they tried to walk in, several maidens, including the bridegroom's sister, stood at the door and wanted some payment before they could allow the married pair the entry into the house. The Sambar, i.e., the bridegroom's sister's husband, paid the girls one rupee, when the way was opened. This ceremony is known as *Bātgherā* or blocking the road. The married pair were now seated on the mat inside the room.

The bride and the bridegroom were taken to the altar. The Sambar now placed an iron bangle (*khāṛu*) in Sashi's hand. This had been previously purchased in the market. According to the direction of the Sambar, the bridegroom applied vermilion, which was in the hand of the Sambar, to the iron bangle. Then the bridegroom applied vermilion by means of the bangle on the forehead and hair-parting of the bride. He then handed over the iron bangle to the bride.

The latter also touched the forehead of the bridegroom with the vermilion on the bangle. This was repeated three times and at last the bridegroom slipped the iron bangle on the left wrist of the bride. This ceremony is known as *khāṛu pārano* or wearing the bangle.

The Sambar now took a hoe and dug a pit on the eastern side of the altar. This pit is called *pukur* or tank. The bride was taken to the left side of the bridegroom. The Sambar poured water kept in the earthen pot placed previously on the altar, over the couple. After that he undid the knot between the cloth of the bride and the turban of the bridegroom. Then he removed the mango leaf tied to the wrist of the brideroom. This mango leaf and the thread were kept in a newly purchased basket.

The couple were supplied with oil for besmearing their bodies and taken to a tank for bath. The Sambar threw the basket into the water of the tank and the couple as well as the Sambar took their bath.

A feast was given to the relatives and the villagers. After the feast was over the bride and the bridegroom took their seat on a mat and villagers and relatives came and made presents to them in cash according to their capacity. Sashi received twelve rupees on the occasion. This is known as *Bāndhāpān.*

The bride stayed eight days in her husband's house. She was not allowed to do any hard work during these days. On the eighth day her brother came to take her back for a few days. This is called *ātmangalā*, i.e., the auspicious eighth day.

Thus the marriage ceremony was over.

Case no. II

This particular case deals with the marriage of a Lodha named Upendra Mallik, aged 20, of Kultikri, with the daughter of Makra Bhakta, aged 13 of Kadamdiha. The marriage took place in the month of Vaisakh 1361 B.S. (April May, 1954). The usual negotiations were gone through and both parties came to each other's house several times. At last the parties reached an agreement and the bride price was fixed at thirty rupees, with several pieces of cloth for the ceremony.

The bride price was received by the bride's mother on a brass plate containing a small quantity of the following sacred articles: cow-dung, unhusked rice and *durbā* grass. Several members including village officials were present during the ceremony. The bridegroom's party placed the money on the plate and received the cowdung, unhusked rice and *durbā* grass as an evidence of sealing the marriage contract. The bride's father asked the bridegroom's party to inform him about the actual date of marriage as early as possible. Then the bridegroom's party went away.

Later on, the date was fixed according to the convenience of the bride's family. No astrologer was consulted for this. The scheduled date was intimated to the bridegroom's family. On the fifth day preceding the marriage, the village messenger or bailiff locally called *Dākuā* of the bridegroom's village Kultikri came to the bride's house with the following presents: a new earthen pot, five pieces of turmeric, one wooden bead necklace such as is worn by the Vaishnavas, one piece of red thread for the waist and a sum of two annas (O. 12 nP.) for the foster-mother. He also brought some quantity of puffed sugar. This day is called the *Mangal* or auspicious day. On that day, both the bride and the bridegroom were anointed ceremonially with turmeric paste. The articles sent through the messenger from the bridegroom's village were received by the bride's mother on a newly purchased winnowing fan. This was kept in a corner of a room.

The method of application of turmeric paste is strikingly different from the previous one. Before sunset turmeric paste was prepared by the village maidens. In the bride's house they applied the paste seven times to the forehead of the bride and then went to take a ceremonial bath. A newly purchased earthen pot was taken by a maiden, while a man of Kotal clan, named Chaitanya Kotal of Pathardahara, took an arrow, a woman's cloth dyed yellow, for the bride and the vermilion, mango twigs, betel leaves and betel nuts for the worship of *Dharmadevatā* or the God of Righteousness.

They reached a tank and went into the water. On the bank, a small quantity of sand was gathered and seven pieces of betel nuts and betel leaves were placed on it. An empty earthen pot was placed on it. Chaitanya Kotal applied vermilion marks on the pot and mango twigs were placed on its mouth. Then he prayed to *Dharmadevatā* for the happy union. He asked one maiden to take the earthen pot from the place and to go into waist-deep water. He himself walked in until the water was waist deep and drew a triangle by means of the arrow in the water. He asked the maiden to dip the pot within the area marked in this manner. The bride now dipped herself into the water and then proceeded to the bank where she was given a piece of cloth for wearing which had been dyed yellow. The pot is known as *Mangal Ghat* or the auspicious vessel. The same operation was also gone through in the bridegroom's house.

In the courtyard of the bride's house, an open shed was erected; the thatch was formed of *sāl* and *mahuā* leaves. Underneath an earthen platform or altar was erected by Chaitanya Kotal, the earth having been brought from the root of the *sidhā* tree. The altar is known as *Bedi*. Every evening the turmeric paste was applied seven times to the forehead and the body of the bride. But she was not allowed to take a bath. She took her usual food but never stirred out of the house so as to avoid possible accidents.

Marriage with a Tree[8]

On the scheduled date the bridegroom started for the wedding ceremony. The sister's husband of the bridegroom, was the chief conductor of the marriage ritual. They took the usual pieces of cloth and two wedding crowns locally called *Mayor* and some cash with them. On the way, the Sambar selected a mango tree. When the party reached the place, the bridegroom was directed to walk three times round the tree and to place his right palm with fingers pointing upwards on the tree. The Sambar tied a thread dyed yellow round the tree and the palm of the bridegroom. He applied three vermilion dots just above the fingers and directed the bridegroom to bow down before the tree. The bridegroom did accordingly and the Sambar removed the thread tied by him. Thus the ceremony of marrying the tree was over and on and from that day the particular mango tree became a taboo to the bridegroom. He could no longer take any fruit or pluck leaves or branches from that tree.

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[8] As far as has been observed, this ceremony is present among the Lodhas to the south of the Subarnarekha in Police Stations of Gopiballavpur and Nayagram. North and east of the river, in Kesiari, Narayangarh, Khargpur, Dantan Police Stations it is absent.

After this the party proceeded towards the bride's village. In the meanwhile the bride was allowed to take a bath on the wedding day and an earthen pot was filled with water without however going through the worship of *Dharmadevatā*. This pot was placed on the altar constructed on the auspicious day. Beneath the pot a small quantity of paddy was kept and vermilion marks were painted by the Kotal on the pot.

Just after the bath the bride was taken to a *māhuā* tree. There she married the tree as the bridegroom had done. The only difference was that there the bride placed her left palm on the trunk and the Kotal tied the ceremonial thread. This tree similarly became a taboo to her. According to some of Lodha informants, this marriage with the tree has got a special meaning. In case death accidentally visits the household, the mango and the *mahuā* surrogates are likely to be affected in place of the real wife or husband. It is thus believed to give some kind of magical protection to the newly married couple.

When the bridegroom arrived with his party they were received by the birde's family as well as the villagers. They were given palm-leaf mats to sit upon and cold drinks were served to them. The cloths brought by the bridegroom's party were taken inside the house and the bride was dressed in them. Later on, the bridegroom was made to stand on one side of the altar facing east. The bride stood opposite facing the bridegroom. Two screens called *Kāndār* were held by the villagers between the couple, so that they could not see one another. In this position, the bride and the bridegroom with those holding the pair of screens were directed by the Kotal to spin round in an anti-clockwise direction seven times. It is reported by some of the Lodha informants that the bride and the bridegroom are taken up on the lap of the bride's sister's husband and bridegroom's sister's husband respectively during the turning of the screen ; but this was not observed in this particular case. At last they stopped and the Kotal prayed to the *Dharmadevatā* for a happy union. He said to the bridegroom, 'You are going to marry this girl. You should forgive her if she does anything wrong. It is your duty to maintain her so that she can be happy.'

After saying this, he blessed the couple by sprinkling water on them and then asked them to sit down on the spot. He tied the end of the bridegroom's turban to the corner of the cloth worn by the bride. The screens were now removed and the Kotal made the bride sit on the left side of the bridegroom. There was a brass plate on which paddy, *durbā* grass and vermilion, etc. were kept. The Kotal asked the bridegroom to apply vermilion to the forehead and the hair-parting of the bride by means of his betelnut cutter, known as *Jānti* which was with him from the day of the application of the turmeric paste. He did so and the bride also touched the vermilion by means of *Kājalpātā*, a receptacle for collyrium, which was also with her from that very day. This operation was repeated thrice. The wedding crowns or head-dresses were now put on the respective heads and the couple were taken inside the room. They were then served with gruel boiled with coarse sugar. The bridegroom was served first and later the bride with a quantity on the dish used by the bridegroom. They passed the night there.

On the next morning, the party, including the bride, started for the bridegroom's village for the rest of the ceremony of marriage which is locally called as *Bāsi Bibāha* or after-marriage rites. The ceremony of 'blocking the road' was done by the sisters of the bridegroom and the village maidens. Wearing of the iron bangle was also done.

Playing Hide and Seek

The bridegroom was removed just behind the bride and called a tank pit was dug by the Sambar. A flat stone was placed upon the tank. Then the Sambar poured water on the couple and the tank became filled up. The bridegroom placed his betel-nut cutter in one corner of the tank and the bride was made to search it out, The bride also hid her Kājalpātā at one corner and the bridegroom had to find it out in the same manner, They repeated the play several times. This is called *Lukochuri Khelā* or 'playing hide and seek'.

Undoing the Sacred Thread on the wrist

On the eve of anointing of turmeric paste a *Bidhi* containing a mango leaf, one betel-nut, one betel leaf each was tied on the wrist of the bride and the bridegroom (bridegroom's right wrist, and the left wrist of the bride). The Sambar took off these from their hands and kept them on the newly purchased basket and went to the tank for a bath. The couple, along with the Sambar, took their bath. The Sambar threw the basket into the tank.

The couple returned home and sat on a mat. The villagers and relatives came and presented them with cash according to their capacity. No auspicious eighth-day or *ātmangalā* ceremony was held in the case. The bride remained there for nearly a month. There was to be a second marriage when the bride attained puberty. In this marriage the Kotal was given a present of Rs. 1.25 while the Sambar was supplied with a new piece of cloth which was dyed yellow with turmeric. The village headman of the bride's village was given Rs. 0. 50 as the tribute in honour of the village council.

Case no. III

This ceremony deals with the marriage of Mahendra Mallik, aged 25, of village Kesiari with Haripriya Digar, aged 21, of Kukai. In this case certain peculiarities were noticed and these are described below. The bridegroom's party consulted the local priest and astrologer who wrote down the names of the bridegroom and the bride and then calculated the auspicious day for the ceremony. The bridegroom's party had to pay something to the astrologer. This date was intimated to the bride's family. According to the direction of the astrologer, the turmeric paste was applied five days prior to the wedding ceremony. On the fifth day preceding the marriage, a barber named Bijay Mana of Kesiari was sent to the bride's place. The bridegroom's elder brother, Kaklu Mallik, accompanied him. The barber took with him some sacred articles like turmeric etc. and a present of sweets in a new earthen pot. There was an iron bangle packed separately with the barber. On that day turmeric paste was formally applied to the bridegroom and the bride with the tying of sacred thread containing *durbā* grass, mango leaf and betel leaf on their wrists. At that time all the women of the family as well as of the same caste in the village blew the conch-shells as an auspicious sign. This is done whenever an important ceremony is performed. Later, a brass pot, one betel-nut, two betel leaves, a copper coin, some quantity of vermilion, *durbā* grass, small mango twigs are carried on a brass plate for the worship of *Basumātā*—Mother Earth, *Dharmadevatā*—God of Righteousness. This was done by the sister of the bridegroom, This worship is intended to record one's obeisance to the Mother Earth and the God of Righteousness, seeking permission for the marriage ceremony. After the ceremonial bath the bridegroom's sister proceeded to her home. She was directed to mark her passage with the corner of her cloth which was then wet. The bridegroom was to follow her.

Every day, before dusk, the bridegroom was anointed with the turmeric paste. He was not allowed to take bath. The bridegroom had to eat only chaffed rice for five days. The same thing was done with the bride.

An earthen altar was erected under each shed built in the courtyards of the bride and the bridegroom. There was no specified earth as found at Jhargram as from the root of the *sidhā* tree. Four whole plantain leaves along with stalks were placed erect at the four corners of the altar.

The Srādh Ceremony (*Offering to the Manes*)

On the wedding day a special offering including rice, curry with fish, etc. was made to the manes by the bridegroom's father. Early in the morning the bridegroom's father took a bath and cooked all these things in a new earthen pot. The offerings were made at noon. He kept these on the *Isān* or raised earthen platform in one corner of his house. He also offered betel leaf and betel nut in the name of the ancestors. After the offering, the family members including the bridegroom and other relatives like the Sambar took their meals together. Next day these offerings were thrown into the water.

On this afternoon, the bridegroom took bath along with his sister before their departure for the ceremony. Again a brass pot was filled with water by his sister and taken to the bride's house.

Several important persons including the bride's brother came to convey the bridegroom, and a cart was arranged for their journey. The brass pot carried by the sister of the bridegroom was placed on the earthen altar on which some unhusked rice had been placed previously. Ornaments and cloths were received by the village headman, though the bridegroom's sister accompanied him.

Two screens were held by the villagers and there was no rotation of it. The couple were directed to sit facing each other; the Kotal tied their palms and put the head-dresses on their heads. Several relatives threw potatoes and brinjals towards the bridegroom demanding some present of sweets. This is called *Hitāl Chandi.* Application of vermilion on the forehead of the bridegroom and the bride was made in a different manner, by means of a grain measure called *Kāthā* or *Ser.* The measure is made of cane slips and its capaciiy is roughly two pounds. This measuring basket and vermilion were placed on a brass plate supplied by the village messenger. The newly married couple went to the *Barām,* the tutelary village deity, and to the shrine of *Sitalā* to pay their obeisance. The application of vermilion was done three times.

The couple were taken inside the room, and served with gruel boiled with coarse sugar. The bridegroom refrained from taking his gruel as he waited for some gift from the bride's parents. This is locally called *Mānkarā.* The bride's mother promised to present one brass plate and bell-metal beaker for drinking water. All other associated rituals were done at the bridegroom's place. There was the auspicious eighth-day ceremony after which the bridegroom came to his father-in-law's house along with the bride. The bride's elder brother went to bring them home. He remained there for two days and new cloths were given to him by the bride's family. This is called *Jāmāi Phirtā* or the 'return of the son-in-law.'

The wedding crowns were thrown into the water after one month. There was a second marriage when the bride attained puberty.

No tree marriage was held in this case and none such was found in this area.

Case no IV

In village Kukai, Brindaban Nayek, aged 22 married Panchami Digar, aged 17, of Satsol under the Police Station of Kesiari. He had to go through the usual rituals except the marriage with the tree as observed in the jungle area of Jhargram. On the second day of the marriage or stale marrriage the bride came to the bridegroom's place. After the reception of the bride and the bridegroom, Brindaban's mother gave them *sherbet* prepared with coarse country sugar. Later a large quantity of unhusked rice was kept on the floor of the room. All the relatives and villagers assembled there. Then one of the sisters of the bridegroom asked the couple to sit near the heap of unhusked rice. The bride was directed to remove it from the place to her side. She did accordingly. Then the bridegroom removed all the grains towards him from the bride's side. This was done three times. Thus the ceremony of 'removing the unhusked rice' or *dhān-sarāna* was over.

According to some of the Lodha informants, this ceremony is nothing but the official recognition of marriage. This was the only ritual found by the writer out of 476 marriage cases throughout Midnapur.

Then all the rituals like wearing of iron bangle, pouring water, hide and seek, etc. were gone through. The couple were then taken to a tank for the ceremonial bath. There they had to perform another ritual which is widely prevalent in Kesiari, Narayangarh, Khargpur, etc. This was performed as follows.

The couple, including the village messenger went into the tank. There, according to the direction of the village messenger, the couple pelted balls of mud at one another. When one tried to hit, the other dived into water. After a few minutes each of them succeeded in catching the other by means of the mud. This ceremony is called 'playing with mud ball' or *Kādā Khelā* ceremony. Some of the Lodha informants said that this ceremony has got an importance in Lodha life. In their distressed family life the Lodha couple quarrel with each other which sometimes take the from of fighting, and beating with injuries on their bodies. This throwing of mud-ball or pelting by means of mud balls just after marriage gives them a ceremonial initiation into what will heppen to them in actual life.

A third ritual was also performed by the bride just after the bath. The couple then came home in their wet cloth. She was given a brass pot filled with water which she had to keep up in a steady position for about half-an-hour. Her steadiness is the proof of her ability and forbearance. In Jhargram one case was found where the pot was filled with sand grains.

On that day the bride and bridegroom had to take their meal cooked in a new earthen vessel. The bride in her wet cloth had to remove the lid of the pot without making any sound. This proves another virtue of the bride. According to the Lodha proverb, this ritual signifies the future of the bride whether she may be *Hānri Khāuki*, i. e. one who stealthily eats from the cooking pot.

This was followed by the usual auspicious 'eighth-day ceremony' and 'return of the son-in-law.'

Second Marriage

Though the wedding ceremony was over, the couple were not allowed to pass nights in the same bed, as the bride had not attained puberty. At the commencement of the first menstruation the bride informed her mother-in-law through village sister of the bridegroom. On the same day news was sent to the bride's father's place. The bride had to stay seven days at the neighbour's house, thus avoiding her husband and male members of the family except little boys and girls. She had to take bath early in the morning and hide her clothes from other people's view. On the seventh day she was brought back to her home, i. e., the bridegroom's house by the same village sister. According to a Lodha saying, on the seventh day, if the bride meet a man on the way after taking her bath, the future offspring would generally possess all the characterestics of the person whom she thus meets accidentally. However, on that day the village messenger, named Gour Kotal, was informed and he collected seven flowers of different colours in a basket. The couple were supplied with cloths dyed yellow in the evening just after bath. This was followed by a feast of sweetmeats. Before dusk the couple were made to stand in the courtyard of the bridegroom. The bridegroom stood facing the east while the bride faced her husband. A screen was held by the villagers. Gour Kotal then gave one red flower to the bride and a white flower to the bridegroom. They exchanged these thrice behind the screen. The ceremony is called *Phul Dekhāna* or the 'showing of the flower.' They were given sweets and the usual meals were served at night. Several villagers were invited on the occasion including the village headman. Then the ceremony was over and the couple were allowed to sleep in the same bed.

In several cases at Dantan, Narayangarh and Kesiari, a barber came from the bride's father's house with several articles. One relative, usually the brother of the bride, comes where the barber is not available. According to the informant, Jiten Mallik of Kukai, the articles are two pieces of of cloths dyed yellow, one for the bride and another for the bridegroom, some sweets, two red threads for the waist, two necklaces of wooden beads, one mat for the bed of the couple. The barber is given his remuneration, though he never takes his meal there. But in the case described above no such arrangement was made by the mother of Panchami, wife of Brindaban.

In the village Ma-Mansa, almost all the marriage ceremonies were attended by the village priest of the same community. There the village messenger had to perform all other ceremonies and the priest had to tie the ceremonial thread on the wedding day. The ceremonial marriage with a tree was also not observed in this area. In the same village, several cases of marriage were reported in which the bride had attained puberty before marriage. So there was no second marriage ceremony. One Lakshmindra Kotal married Kini in the same village. They first sought an astrologer's advice. The turmeric paste was applied on the day before marriage. An auspicious pot was filled with water on that day and was taken to the place of the bride. The priest tied the ceremonial thread. Before the ceremony proper, a screen was held between the bride and the bridegroom and the village messenger showed them the flowers of different colours at that time. After 'the showing of flower' ceremony, the marriage ceremony took place. There was no special second marriage ceremony. The bride and the bridegroom were taken inside a room where some drawings representing the wedding crowns, betelnut-cutter and *Kājalpātā*, etc. were made on the floor of the room by means of unboiled rice paste or solution. This was done by the village maidens including the sisters of the bridegroom.

One Maheswar Kotal, the former messenger of the village Ma-Mansa reported that when the bride and the bridegroom were of a very tender age, no screens were held during the wedding ceremony. There would be a second marriage when the bride attained puberty.

Application of vermilion was made on the wedding day and occasionally the bridegroom slipped on the iron bangle on that day. This was verified by several cases found at Dihipur, Metial, Parulda, Birkar, Kajla, etc. under Narayangrah P. S.

Case No. V

One Santosh Kotal of Dihipur married Matangini Bhakta, daughter of Hemlal Bhakta of Kumardubi, P. S. Khargpur. A bride price of rupees eighteen only was paid. The astrologer was consulted for the auspicious day of marriage. On the third day preceding the marriage ceremony, turmeric paste was applied and ceremonial bath took place. This day is called *Temaṇgalā* or the auspicious third day. On the wedding day the bridegroom also took a bath. The village messenger drew a triangle mark with a knife instead of an arrow on the water before the ceremonial dipping of the auspicious pot. A holy man belonging to the Vaishnava sect attended the function instead of the Deheri or village priest. His name was Shibu Das of village Shankhua, P. S. Khargpur. All other rituals were performed by the village messenger and the Deheris of the respective villages. There was no screen. The Vaishnava propitiated different deities and took about an hour to do so. He sprinkled water and unhusked rice upon the couple. He recited several incantations. This was repeated by the bridegroom. At the end of the ceremony he advised the bridegroom not to beat his wife or torture her in any way. He was advised to take responsibility of feeding her and to forgive her faults if she committed any. After giving this advice he tied the ceremonial thread. There was a sound of conch shells blown by the village women. Then the village messenger made the bride sit on the left side of the bridegroom as usual. Shibu Das, the Vaisnava mendicant was presented with a sum of ten rupees for his services. He did not take his meal there.

There was also the second marriage ceremony. The wedding crowns were thrown into water after one month and a half.

Remarriage or Sāngā

Sāngā or marrying a widow or a divorced wife is not uncommon among the Lodhas. This marriage ceremony costs less than the usual one. The ceremony is performed when one's wife dies or she does not bear any child or even runs away, or where economic condition enables a man to have a second wife.

One Ganesh Dandapat, aged 32, of Rangtia married Rasabala Nayek, aged 28, of the same village. A negotiation was carried on through a middleman and later, Ganesh paid

Rs. 1. 25 as the royalty to the village council. Rasabala was a widow and she had no children. There was no fixed date for the ceremony and no specific ritual for it. Here Ganesh simply went to Rasabala's father's place and took her along with him. He handed over the royalty in cash to the village headman. Ganesh had a wife who had, however, left him. One Panchanan Mallik, aged 38, of Sankaridanga married Nirada, aged 32, of Bhangapur, who had left her husband. Panchanan went there with a relative of Nirada, had a negotiation, and paid Rs. 1. 25 as royalty to the village headman and took Nirada as his *Sāngāli* wife.

There is no ritual associated with keeping a concubine among the Lodhas.

The marriage cycle of the Lodhas comprise many important stages of inter-cultural relations. Almost all the major phases of the ritual cycle are observed by the Lodhas with certain variations necessitated by circumstances and environmental changes. Negotiations or arrangements for the marriage are conducted by the elderly persons of the families concerned where the bride and the groom had attained marriageable age. The construction of the marriage booth is arranged by the Sambar, the husband of the bridegroom's sister, as he acts as the chief conductor of the wedding ceremony. In Dantan, Narayangarh, Sabang and Khargpur Police Stations, sometimes the Deheri or the village priest or Kotal or the village messenger and in rare cases, a Vaishnava mendicant, is found to initiate the ceremony. These are strikingly absent in the jungle areas of Jhargram Sub-division. In the same way, marriage booth or an earthen platform is prepared by the Sambar who brings with him some clay from the root of a *sidhā* tree. This is not found in the agricultural settlements. Again tree marriage is current in the Police Stations of Nayagram and Gopiballavpur only. At these places invocation of Basumātā or Dharam Devatā is also an important ritual except in the Police Stations of Jhargram and Jamboni. Offering to the manes is also celebrated mainly in the Police Stations of Kesiari, Narayangarh, Khargpur and Sabang in which places ancestral spirits are propitiated.

No songs or dances are performed during the marriage ceremony anywhere by the Lodhas.

To provide a comparative study of the marriage ceremonies, a comparative Table has been furnished below. In it the main ritual patterns of the Lodhas from the jungle as well as agricultural areas, the Mahatos or Kurmi-Mahatos, the other aboriginal derivatives living in the jungle areas and the Mahishyas, another agricultural as well as prosperous community of the district, have been cited side by side. Though quite striking variations are noticed among these communities in relation to their education, economic life and social status, yet only important elements of an orthodox type of ceremony have been shown bellow for a general assessment of a particular phase of their social life.

TABLE 23

MARRIAGE RITUALS OF THE LODHAS AND OTHER CASTES COMPARED

Elements	Lodha		Mahato	Mahishya
	Western Area	Eastern Area		
Negotiation or arrangement ...	+	+	+	+
Betrothal by formal presents ...	+	+	+	+
Payment of bride price	+	+	+	—
Date fixation by parties	+	—	+	—
Date fixation by astrologer ...	—	+	—	+
Confirmation with presentation of articles	+	+	+	—
Anointment with turmeric paste ...	+	+	+	+
Ceremonial feast for the bride and bridegroom by villagers and relatives	—	—	+	+
Erection of marriage booth ...	+	+	+	+
Construction of earthen platform with clay brought from the root of Sidhā tree	+	—	—	—
Ceremonial bathing and filling of earthen water vessel ...	+	+	+	+

(TABLE 23 CONTD.)

Ritual Patterns	Lodha		Mahato	Mahishya
	Western Area	Eastern Area		
Placing of arrow on the pot to counteract evil eyes	+	+	−	−
Ceremonial offering to the manes ...	−	+	−	+
Marriage with a tree	+	−	+	−
Ceremonial reception of the bridegroom's party	+	+	+	−
Chief conductor belongs to the same community	+	+	+	−
Chief conductor belongs to the Brahmin community	−	−	−	+
Bridal knot	+	+	+	+
Application of vermilion ...	+	+	+	+
Pelting of earthen nodules or fruits at the bridegroom ...	+	+	−	−
Repetition of part of marriage ceremony on the second day ...	+	+	−	+
Blocking of the door	+	+	−	−
Wearing of iron bangle	+	+	+	+
Playing hide-and-seek	+	+	−	−
Undoing the bridal knot ...	+	+	+	+
Ceremonial gifts to the couple ...	+	+	+	+
Removing unhusked rice ...	−	+	−	−
Playing with mud ball	−	+	−	−
Carrying water pot by the bride ...	+	+	−	−
Removing the lid of cooling pot ...	−	+	−	−
Throwing the ceremonial basket and wedding crown	+	+	+	+
Staying of the bride on the auspicious eighth day	+	+	+	−
Second marriage	+	+	−	+

* In the above table + mark indicates rituals that are in vogue and − shows those that are no longer practised.

III *Death observances*

Disposal of the dead is associated with performance of elaborate rituals by the Lodhas. There are two traditional ways of disposing of the dead body. One is cremation and the other is burial. The method of disposal is determined according to the nature of death, like death caused by snake bite, attack by wild animals, drowning or epedemic diseases or delivery or it may be a natural death due to old age.

Information about the death and funeral ceremonies were collected from various Lodha villages of different tracts of Midnapur. A good many people participating in funeral rituals were consulted and a few case-histories are cited here along with the variations observed by the writer.

Case No. I

This particular case deals with the death of the father of Suren Mallik of Mahischhar, Police Station Jhargram, Midnapur. The rites and ceremonies which were performed in this particular case were divided into several phases mentioned below:—

(i) Arrangements for and method of burial;

(ii) daily offering of food to the spirit of the dead during the mourning period locally called *Khuli Jogān* ;

(iii) celebration of *Kshurhānri* or a pot for the shaving and paring off nails or locally termed as '*Ghāt*'. This is called '*Āns Dubān*' or immersion of the fish rice-ball ;

(iv) cooking for the *Guruputā* or cooking for the persons who took the bier to the burial ground and the disposal of the '*Prethānri*' or cooking pot which is connected with the departed spirit ;

(v) *Gheepoṛī* and *Ghee Hānṛi* or burning of the clarified butter ;

(vi) preparation for *Srādh* ceremony.

Treatment of Disease

Suren's father was an old man and had been suffering from fever for nine days. Medicinal herbs were given to him by the local medicineman of his own caste. No physician attended the case. At last one morning all signs of imminent death were manifestly visible, Then Suren and his brothers poured the last drops of water into the mouth of the dying patient, They brought this water in a brass cup and said, 'Father, please take some water. This is our last offering to you.' At last the patient breathed his last. He died in an advanced age. It was, therefore, believed by his sons and other relatives that it was a case of natural death.

At the house of the Dead

The dead person was laid upon a mat with only a piece of old cloth spread over the body. At the time of death his sons were all present by his side. Gradually the other members of the family as well as some neighbours began to assemble there. The female relatives of the deceased rent the welkin with their screams and wailings. This loud wailing and crying continued for a long time. When their grief seemed to have partially subsided, the elderly members of the village advised Suren to make necessary arrangements for the disposal of the dead body. Some of the villagers were sent to other villages where the relatives of the deceased lived. Then Suren covered the whole dead body with the cloth which the person put on before his death. His head was not turned either to the left or to the right. Only a sickle was placed on the bed of the dead by Suren to protect the body from being possessed by spirits which is more or less a matter of belief with the Lodhas. It is believed that iron has this property.

Some elderly women of the neighbourhood prepared turmeric paste. A little mustard oil was mixed with it. Some of the members of the bereaved family applied the oil and the turmeric to the body of the dead.

In the meantime a few villagers constructed a bier made of bamboos. It was prepared with two long horizontal bamboo poles placed parallel to each other. Some small bamboo bars crossed each other with their ends tied to those two long poles. The distance between the bars was a cubit or so. The rope used for fastening these pieces was made of straw. Then a mat was spread upon the bier. The dead body was then brought out of the hut and placed on the bier with the head placed northwards. The sickle was placed on the bier on which the corpse was securely tied by means of a worn-out cloth used by the deceased. Then the bier was taken upon the shoulders by Suren, his two brothers and one of his cousins. Other elderly persons of the village followed them with a hoe and an earthen pitcher to the burial ground and a twisted straw bundle was prepared to take fire. In the meantime Suren's wife took out all earthen vessels of the house and went to the jungle to throw these away. She threw all the used earthen vessels into the jungle one by one. With the help of other female members of the family she prepared a paste of cowdung with water and cleansed the floors and the courtyard of the house where the deceased was laid. They also sprinkled cowdung solution on the courtyard of the house and even on the passages around the hut.

At the Burial Ground

There is no special burial ground of the Lodhas in this village. Any jungle area away from the locality suitable for the purpose is used by them, whereas other castes have their own selected cremation grounds. The funeral party reached the burial ground in due course with frequent shouts of *Haribol* (a from of invocation of the Lord *Hari*). The bier was placed on the ground with the head of the deceased kept northwards. Suren sat near the bier and remained touching it all the while with his hands. This was to signify that the corpse was not left unattended. His elder brother, facing the north, gave the first stroke of the hoe to dig a pit for burying the dead body. The grave was about four cubits long, one and a half cubits broad and three cubits deep. All persons attending the funeral helped one another in digging. It took an hour to dig out the grave to the required size. Then the dead body was brought out of the bier and placed on a mat already spread out on the bottom of the pit. Suren cut off the red thread which was tied around the waist of his deceased father with a sickle and threw it away. All of them shouted *Haribol*. They repeated it thrice. The head of the deceased was kept towards the north with face upward and hands placed as usual by his sides. The old piece of cloth was spread upon his body so as to cover the whole of it. Then some one of the party undid the knots of the bier. The bamboo poles were then placed upon the dead body. Thus a roof-like structure was made. At first Suren's elder brother placed some clods over the dead and then the men of the party followed him to fill up the grave with earth. Some of them pressed on the surface of the earthen heap to level it down. Suren's elder brother Rajani sat close to the grave. After the grave was filled up, one of his cousins shut his eyes with his fingers. Then Rajani was directed to throw the fire carrier of straw just over that part of the grave below which the face of his father was kept, uttering these words: 'O Father: I am now applying the fire to your face.' Then Suren kept the dish brought from his home by the left side of the grave. This dish contained soaked rice. This was kept for feeding the spirit of the dead. Thus the burial was over.

Then he went back and stood at a distance facing the east. He was advised not to turn his face backwards or to see the grave any more.

At the end of the graveyard one person of the funeral party placed three *kānkul* (Capparis horida) thorns and branches on the way through which the party would return. The twisted rope of the straw with which the bier was made was tied by two of them to the trees near by. All of them gradually crossed the *kānkul* thorns with a little step forward and passed over the rope. When they crossed it they said addressing the spirit of the deceased—'This is your way and that is ours. This rope and *kānkul* thorns show our lines of demarcation.'

Then the party proceeded towards the house. The last person made a hole on the body of the earthen pitcher with a sickle and stepped over the thorns.

Returning from the Burial Ground

All the persons then assembled near a stream as there was no pond near by. They went into the depth of it and took their bath. As the bathing was over they again shouted thrice—*Haribol, Haribol, Haribol*. The handle of the hoe was then thrown away into the water.

Embracing of the Peepal three

Suren's elder brother, Rajani, first went to the old peepal tree and embraced it on his way back home. He did so thrice. After him all the persons embraced the peepal tree in turn and proceeded homewards. When they came back to Suren's house, a fire was lighted in front of the entrance. An earthen lid was brought and several burning wooden pieces were placed on it. A few locks of hair cut from the heads of female members of the bereaved family were placed on the fire and incense was added to it. The party sat around the fire and placed their palms on it to warm themselves up. When the palms were warmed, they also warmed their faces by means of the palms. All the persons did it. It took nearly an hour to observe this rite. The person whose turn came last threw the lid away.

The womenfolk of the family as well as those of the neighbours who came and joined the funeral rites went to take their bath though none of them participated in the funeral procession. All the members sat on the courtyard.

In the meantime, rice was fried in the house of a neighbour. Suren placed the sickle and the hoe without the handle on the spot where the person had breathed his last. All the members who joined the funeral rites took some fried rice. At first all of them placed a few grains of fried rice as an offering to the departed soul on the place where the man died. Then they began to eat the same.

The hearth was not lighted on that day for cooking. They took flattened rice soaked in water as their evening meal. The other neighbours and relatives gradually went back to their respective houses.

Daily Offerings of food to the dead

Suren is the second of the three brothers. His father liked to stay with him. Therefore daily offerings of food to the dead were made by Suren. This was arranged by means of 'Telpānjā' which is a sort of divination.

Oil Divination or Telpānjā

Suren brought three fresh *sāl* leaves in the morning on the second day of mourning. He sat on the ground facing east. His other brothers and some of the relatives also were present at that time. He placed three drops of mustard oil, one on each leaf. Then he folded each of the leaves by means of a thorn. The three leaves were kept separate in the name of the three brothers. Addressing the dead father he said, 'O Father! tell us with whom you are pleased?' After saluting with folded hands he examined each leaf if the oil drop on it was intact. The oil drop on the leaf kept in the name of Suren was found all right while those on the other two leaves were found rolling down. This performance was repeated thrice, each time the oil drop on the leaf allotted to Suren remaining intact. Thus the oil divination ceremony was over and Suren was chosen to perform the son's duty of daily offering food to the spirit of his deceased father.

Every day Suren, after taking his bath, cooked rice and a vegetable curry in a new earthen pot. No fish or meat or *sājinā* (Morninga pterygosperma) leaves were cooked. At about 2 p, m. he brought several *sāl* leaves of which three cup-like containers locally called *Khuli* were made. In one container he put the cooked rice, in another the curry and in the third he put a little water. On a *sāl* leaf a small twig was kept for use as a tooth brush. By the side of the hearth there was a raised place called *Isān*. It was the place where cooking pots are generally kept, Suren cleansed the *Isān* and plastered it with cowdung solution. On this raised place these articles for repast were offered in the name of the dead persons of the family. Suren now bowed down before the offering and came out of the place. Then the members of the family would take their meals though sometimes children were allowed to take flattened rice before the performance if they felt extremely hungry. Regular offerings of food to the dead in the manner described above are called *Khulijogān* or 'supplying of Khuli or cup' to the dead. This was observed daily throughout the period of mourning. Next morning these so-called used rice, curry, etc. were thrown away into the water by the female members while, in one corner of the courtyard, the leaf-cups were kept impaled on a sharp wooden stick. Throughout the mourning period the members of the family neither took fish, meat and *sajina* leaves, nor washed their cloths with soap. They also did not use hair oil nor did crop hair or pare off nails. On the last day of the performance they mourned for the dead. The female members cried loudly when Suren offered his last leaf-cup to the deceased.

Preparation for the Ceremony

On the last day, that is, on the tenth day, Suren had to perform certain ceremonies. So within this period he had to collect money to meet the expenditure and to make all other arrangements for the *Srādh* ceremony. He borrowed some money from one of his relatives and collected a small amount from other neighbouring castes by begging. With this money he purchased from the market several pieces of cloth, a few earthen pots, pulses, vegetables, etc. Sufficient paddy was husked for feeding people invited to the ceremony. He sent news to the family barber and washerman to attend. Some of the invited relatives also attended the ceremony on the tenth day.

Ceremony on the tenth day

Early in the morning the female members of the family cried loudly when some of the relativess came to Suren's place. The earthen pots were thrown away into the near by jungle by the female members. These pots were purchased during the mourning period. The female members cleansed the house and the courtyard once again with cow-dung solution. Suren and his brothers went to the bank of the stream with the following articles in a basket:—

(i) New pieces of cloth for the mourners (seven in number),
(ii) Mustard oil,
(iii) Turmeric paste,
(iv) One earthen wide-mouthed pot called *Khāprā*,
(v) Unboiled rice weighing about 4 ounces,
(vi) The leaf-cups or *Khulis* in which the daily offerings were made,
(vii) Match boxes,
(viii) Red thread for the waist and wooden bead necklaces.

The clan members, villagers and the persons who attended the burial ground, assembled there. The barber shaved them all. Suren and his brothers shaved their heads. The female members including the wives of the three brothers came last and got their nails pared.

A cousin brother of Suren brought four earthen clods of big size for preparing a hearth. Some members of the party went to the depth of the stream and tried to secure a fish. A small fish was available. The fish was kept in a leaf cup. The rice was now kept in the earthen pot. Just enough water was added to it. Then three nails of the three daughters-in-law of the deceased and a few locks of hair collected by the barber were handed over to Suren who passed these on to his cousin. The latter put these inside the cooking pot. At last the heaped-up dried leaf-cups already brought there were used as fuel to boil the rice, fish, hair and nails together. This took about an hour. This ritual is called *Kshurhānri* or *Ghāt.*

Preparation of Rice Ball

Two rice balls were prepared out of the rice, fish, hair and nails boiled already by the cousin of Suren. He kept these balls over two leaves. A small quantity of mud was mixed with these balls.

Suren, along with his cousin and his elder brother took one rice ball and went to the stream. The rice ball was held by Suren and the other two simply touched it with the right hand. Then they jointly said, 'O Father! we are immersing the fish-rice', and left the rice ball there and dived in three different directions. They were cautious enough not to touch one another. Being back to the bank they anointed their bodies with mustard oil and turmeric paste. They wore new pieces of cloth. Wooden bead necklaces and red threads for the waist were also supplied to them.

In the like manner the three daughters-in-law (wives of the three sons of the deceased) were supplied with another ball of rice. They dropped the rice ball in the same manner, parted from each other and got ashore at three distant points on the bank. They also took their bath and put on new cloths and wooden bead necklaces. Red threads for waist were also given to them. According to some of the Lodha informants, the ceremonial immersion of the rice ball indicated the end of the death pollution. The used cloths of the mourners were taken by the washerman. The washerman and the barber were paid in cash Rs. 2/- each for their services. Here ended the ceremony of the 'immersion of the fish-rice-ball'. On this day the villagers and other relatives were entertained with flattened rice and coarse sugar.

Feeding to Kānd Kātuā or Guruputā

The *Kānd Kātuā* or *Guruputā* means the 'men who helped in the burial or cremation services' as already mentioned. It is therefore obligatory that they should be entertained with a feast even if others are left out. Suren already made some arrangements to feed the persons who attended the funeral rites. Two separate earthen pots were procured before dusk for cooking, one for members of the family, and the other for invited guests. One new hearth was prepared in the courtyard. Suren's cousin cooked outside the room while the female members cooked inside. Some quantity of rice, vegetables, curries of fish and meat (fowl) placed on a leaf were first offered near the hearth to the spirit of the dead. Then the feast began. When it was over, leaves and other refuses were thrown away. The food offered to the spirit of the dead was put inside the hearth which was now filled up with mud. The *Pret Hānri* or the 'cooking pots connected with the spirit' were kept near the refuse. The whole courtyard was cleansed with cow-dung paste. Suren was directed to throw away the pot offered to the spirit before sunrise.

The pots used inside the house were also heaped up with all other refuse. Next morning Suren woke up very early and carried these pots and leaves to the jungle. While going alone he had all along to remain silent. After the disposal of these pots he took his bath in the stream and came back home.

Burning of Clarified Butter

On the eleventh day the following articles were collected :—

(i) A little clarified butter,
(ii) Dried mango twigs.

These were burnt by a Vaishnava on the spot where the person had breathed his last. Thus the death pollution was over. The Vaishnava was given rupee one and twenty-five naya paise in cash. Then new earthen pots were brought for cooking purposes. Some elderly persons helped Suren in cooking. As soon as the cooking was over, Suren offered all the items including curry, etc. to the spirit of the dead on the Isan. This was kept there all day and night. This is called the '*Srāddha*' ceremony. On that day a feast was given to the villagers and relatives as well.

Next day the food offered to the spirit of the dead was thrown away into the stream by Suren. Henceforth the newly purchased earthen pots in which the *Srāddha* cooking was made, continued to the used as long as they would last. Thus the funeral rites were over.

Case No. 2

In 1952, a death took place at Radhanagar. The dead body which was that of the father of Nitai and Gultu was carried by seven persons. No women participated in the funeral procession. The spirit of the dead was offered a cup of barley. Nitai's brother-in-law (sister's husband) Rakhal was the chief person to conduct the burial. Ten days were observed as the days of mourning.

Many cases of disposal of the dead were heard of in which the observance of the mourning period was noted to be the same although the methods of treatment varied from place to place. In each case, on the last day of purification ceremony, a Vaishnava mendicant comes who brings water and sprinkles it on the floor where the man died. This particular quantity of water is described by the Lodhas as *Sāntijal*, i. e. 'holy water.'

Cremation

Next to burial, cremation is the alternative method of disposal of the dead bodies, and this is largely practised in different places of Kesiari, Narayangarh, Khargpur and Sabang Police Stations. The particular case cited below deals with a funeral ceremony observed when Akhil Paramanik, aged 60, of Saldanga died. Akhil was suffering from typhoid. The local doctor was called in for treatment. But the patient died at dead of night. It was the month of Phālgun (March-April). He left three married sons, some daughters and grandsons. Bharat was the eldest and Sudhanya was next to him. The members of the family could understand the hopelessness of the case that morning. A few minutes before the old man died his children came near him and poured a few drops of water into his mouth. When the patient expired, they mourned for him. Having no other Lodha families near by, the sons could not arrange for the funeral so late at night. The three brothers kept a sickle on the death bed and remained sitting on it till the next morning. Early in the morning Nanku, the youngest son of Akhil went to Kukai to ask some of the relatives to assist them in the funeral. About eight persons came. They cut down some trees for cremation. Wood from peepal and banyan trees cannot be used for cremation. Some of them began to make the bier of some crossed bamboo bars tied with a twisted rope of straw. The wife of Bharat, the eldest son of Akhil, brought the following articles:—

(i) A little honey.
(ii) A little clarified butter.
(iii) Water of River Ganges previously collected in a jar.
(iv) A quantity of fresh turmeric paste.

All these things were mixed together in a bell-metal cup. Water brought in an earthen pitcher was sprinkled upon the dead body by Bharat the eldest son. Nanku the youngest brought several *tulasi* (Oscimum bacilicum) leaves and made a garland with these with the fibre of a plantain stalk. The dead body was garlanded and a few *tulasi* leaves with rice were put into the mouth by Bharat. He then tied a torn piece of cloth upon Akhil's face. A handful of earth from the *tulasi*[9] *Mānch* (a mound of earth on which a holy *tulasi* plant is reared) was smeared upon the forehead of the corpse. Rakshit Kotal, Lakshindra Mallik, Madhab and Jajneswar of the village Kukai placed the dead body on the bed prepared already on the bier. The sickle was kept on it along with dead body.

Another rite which was performed by Bharat's wife consisted of the following articles on a brass plate:—

(i) Some unhusked rice.
(ii) Some *durbā* grass.
(iii) One earthen lamp.

The lamp was lit. Bharat went round the dead body thrice with the lamp and kept it at its feet and all the members of the family bowed down before the dead. This rite is called *Achmān*.

The following articles were kept ready for use for the ceremony on the burial ground by Rakshit Kotal:—

(i) One twisted straw bundle to keep the fire.
(ii) One rope of *sābāi* grass cut off from the roof.
(iii) One earthen pitcher.
(iv) One hoe.
(v) Some soaked rice in a bell-metal cup.

Bharat and Nanku (two sons of the dead) and two others took the bier on their shoulders, frequently shouting 'Haribol' till they reached the cremation ground.

The cremation ground was situated near the matalled road. It was used by other people also. Logs of wood had already been carried there by some members of the funeral party and kept on one side of the ground. When the dead body was taken out, Bharat's wife prepared a cow-dung paste with water in a bowl and began to sprinkle it on the way along the path till the corpse was taken to a distance of 100 yards from the hut. She then gathered all the used earthen vessels of the household and threw them away by the road side.

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[9] Hindus consider *tulasi* leaves as sacred.

The female members by this time cleansed the house and the courtyard and plastered these with the cow-dung solution.

On the Cremation Ground

The dead body was kept on one side and Nanku was directed to remain touching the corpse all the time. Bharat, the eldest son, was directed by Rakshit Kotal and Jiten Mallik to give the first stroke for digging out a pit for the funeral pyre. Before doing this he had to observe the custom of putting one copper coin on the ground as the value of the land bought from Mother Earth for a place in the burial ground. Bowing down his head he gave the first stroke on the ground and made a pit three cubits in length, one cubit in depth, and one and a half cubits in breadth. Two large wooden logs, two and a half cubits in length, were placed length-wise by the two sides within the pit. Other pieces of wood were so arranged as to construct a pyre. The cover over the dead body, its old cloths, and the red thread around the waist were all taken off. Rokshit Kotal and Jiten held the dead body and placed it on the pyre with its face downwards and head towards the north. The legs were folded backwards from the knee-joints and a heavy log was placed on them to put these under sufficient pressure. Bharat took the fire carrier or *Beniā* in hand, walked seven times round the funeral pyre, while he kept it towards the left. Then he applied the fire to the dead man's face. This practice is called *Mukhāgni* i. e. 'application of fire to the face'. During this performance all of them kept on repeating the cry *Hāribol*. The funeral pyre flared up and small pieces of wooden logs were added to it at intervals. Some soaked rice was offered to the spirit of the dead on the right side of the pyre by Bharat. Other cloths kept with the dead were heaped up on the left side and set fire to.

Jiten brought several branches of *kānkul* thorns and divided them into seven parts. He gave seven strokes on the ground at a distance of one foot each with the hoe, placed seven thorny branches inside the pits, and covered them with clods. When the cremation was over, they decided to leave the spot. Bharat took the sickle and made a hole on the body of the earthen pitcher while he was leaving the place. All of them crossed these *Kānkul* thorns and shouted 'Haribol.' They came to a tank near by. Sudhanya, another son of the dead, brought some mustard oil. The party took cow-dung in their hands and washed them with it. They anointed mustard oil all over their bodies and had bath thereafter. The handle of the hoe was thrown away in the tank. All of them embraced a peepal tree on the bank after bath.

On the courtyard incense was being burnt in an earthen pot. They placed their hands over the smoke. On a brass plate a gold ornament, one silver coin, one copper piece, a little cowdung, some *durbā* grass and some husked rice were kept. After adding some water to these the members of the funeral party dipped their hands in it.

A hoe, a sickle and a *Kānkul* thorn had already been placed on the spot where the old man had died. One *benā* (Operculina turpethum) plant was brought from the ridge of a paddy field by Rakshit Kotal who placed it on the northern side of the courtyard. This place was cleansed with cow-dung. They offered some flattened rice, *āsāl* twig for tooth brush, and some water in a leaf cup at about 8 a. m. every day to the spirit of his dead father. Before dusk he also used to offer rice and curry in the same way. Thus the ceremony of *khulijogān* or 'supplying of plate' continued upto the tenth day. Bharat prepared a bed of straw to lie on throughout the mourning period. On the fourth day Rakshit Kotal and Jiten of Kukai visited the cremation ground at about 8-30 a.m. with Bharat. They took with them one earthen pitcher, a new piece of cloth, one *tulasi* plant, four bamboo sticks and the sickle used previously.

Bharat brought water from the tank and poured it on the pyre thrice. Rakshit Kotal removed the half-burnt wooden pieces from the pyre to one side. Jiten supplied mud to Rakshit. Rakshit prepared a human image on the pyre. A *tulasi* sprout was planted on the head of this image on the pyre. Four bamboo sticks were inserted on the four corners of the figure and the new piece of cloth was tied to the tops of the sticks forming a canopy. Before their return they made a hole in the new earthen pitcher.

On that day a new earthen pot was used for cooking. From this day the family took vegetarian diet until the period of mourning was over. On the tenth day the ceremonial feast was held and *Pret-hānri* or 'spirit pot' was removed very early in the morning. The 'immersion of fish rice ball' was done in the same way. The *bena* plant was now removed and thrown into water. On the eleventh day there was burning of clarified butter by a Vaishnava. The following articles were collected for the purpose:—

(i) A few pieces of mango wood.
(ii) A few pieces of peepal wood.
(iii) A few pieces of *neem* wood.
(iv) A few pieces of *kul* (Zizyphus zuguba).
(v) A few pieces of *sal* wood.
(vi) Honey.
(vii) Earth from the holy Ganges.
(viii) *Tulasi* leaves.
(ix) A copper coin.
(x) Gold.
(xi) Clarified butter.
(xii) Coarse sugar.

Rakshit Kotal assisted the Vaishnava. He piled up all these things and uttered some sacred incantations. Clarified butter was thrown little by little on the flaring pile. This took about an hour to complete. At last milk was poured on it to put down the fire. The Vaishnava was given Rs. 2/- and a few seers of husked rice as his fee.

Bharat offered *Srāddha* or offerings to the spirit of the dead on that day on the raised earthen platform and next day the materials of the *Srāddha* were thrown away by him into a tank. A feast was given to the people of his community.

In Ma-Mansa, Karangabari and Dihipur, in several cases, mourning is observed for a period of 30 days instead of 10 days. They cremate the dead body. On the 30th day they immerse the fish-rice ball. The *Srāddha* ceremony takes place on the morrow. This custom is prevalent in the Police Stations of Sabang, Narayangarh and Khargpur.

Death of a Pregnant Woman

On the death of a pregnant woman the body is disposed of in the same manner, and *Altā* or lac-dye is applied to the feet and vermilion is smeared on the forehead to indicate that her husband is still living. In Jhargram Sub-division the dead body of a pregnant woman is disposed of in a different way as described below.

In Pathardahara, Binanda Bhakta's wife, aged 28 years, died of fever leaving her husband and two sons behind. As usual, the family mourned her death. News was sent to her father's place. Several female relations of the dead also came and mourned her loss. Mustard oil and turmeric paste were applied to her body, lac dye was painted on her feet, vermilion marks were applied to her forehead, and her hair was combed by other female members of the village.

According to some Lodha informants the piercing of three *kānkul* thorns on each foot of the dead is the alternative to red colour painting for foot. The dead body was taken to the burial ground on a bier made of bamboos. A grave was dug by the funeral party which consisted of six members only. A knife was also taken by Binanda, the deceased's husband. Just prior to placing the dead body into the grave, Binanda was directed by an old man to open the uterus and take out the placenta. The dead body was then buried facing the east with the head northwards. The cloth was not taken off her body. The ornaments she used to wear were also not removed. The placenta was buried separately on the left side of the grave. The knife used has a special magical power. The medicinemen or *Gunnis* generally try to secure such knives for magical purposes.

The eldest son of Binanda first filled the grave by throwing clods into it. The straw rope in which fire was carried was thrown in the grave.

Ten days were observed as the period of mourning. On the tenth day the usual ceremony of fish-rice ball immersion was performed. Separate cooking arrangements were made, one for the family and another for the persons attending the funeral.

On the eleventh day a *Srāddha* ceremony was performed by Binanda and a ceremonial feast was given to the villagers and relatives.

Death of a Child

Children with ages ranging from 4 to 5 years, are generally buried according to the custom prevailing among the Lodhas. Three or five days are observed for death pollution, after which nails are pared off, hair cropped and shaving done by a barber. A washerman comes and takes the used clothes for washing. No *Srāddha* is performed on such occasions.

In Kukai, a child only eight days old, of Ekadasi, the daughter of Aghore Mallik died of some unknown disease. Jiten the medicineman was called in for its treatment, but the child could not be saved. Only the mother Ekadasi mourned for the baby and this mourning period continued for three days. Others did not observe any mourning. After its death, the baby was taken to the burial ground with a little mat and the torn pieces of cloth used by it. Ram Kotal the oldest man of the village took .the dead body to the burial ground, dug a pit and interred it. Then he took bath, threw away the handle of the hoe and embraced a peepal tree. He did not observe the ritual of touching incense smoke.

After three days the cooking pots were thrown away and new pots were used. The male members had a shave and pared off their nails.

General Observations

The unprecendented and terrific cyclone of 1942 in Midnapur was followed by a district-wide famine and an outbreak of epidemic diseases devastating this part of Bengal. A large number of people fell victims to these scourges. During this period in Kukai one Jajneswar lost his wife, brother, mother and a few children being left alone to mourn their loss. One day when three members of his family died of cholera, none of the villagers came to his help. Alone he had to carry the corpses one by one and throw these away on the burial ground as an exigent measure of disposal. Innumerable cases of like nature, of which the writer had the misfortune to hear in some details from his informants, filled his heart with enduring grief and pain.

According to some of the Lodha informants, in the case of accidental deaths such as those from snake-bite, attack by a tiger or drowning, the dead bodies are generally thrown upon the burial ground or in a jungle. Persons dying of leprosy are buried according to usual custom.

Funeral rituals of the Lodhas show some fundamental tribal characteristics and are associated with some queer beliefs regarding causes of death and about spirits of the departed. Unnatural deaths are treated in different ways in the observance of the funeral customs. Though burial is a socially acknowledged practice, yet a formal application of fire is done which is purely a Hindu custom as described in detail in Case No.1. In minor details of the rituals and the beliefs realating to these customs, a slight variation may be noticed here and there. In Case No. 2, burial is due to the dearth of firewood for cremation. The death pollution terminates after an elaborate purificatory ceremony and everywhere a Vaishnaua has to sprinkle holy water during the services pertaining to cremation as a traditinal religious custom. Thus many Hinduised traits are observed in the ceremony connected with the death of the Lodhas. Invocation or calling back of the soul of the departed is thought to be ominous. *Srāddha* or offerings to the manes are made annually on the last day of Chaitra (March-April) or in rare cases at the time of a wedding ceremony. Blessings are sought for from the ancestral spirits for the well-being of the mourners.

CHAPTER VI

VILLAGE ORGANISATION, SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS

Village forms an important unit in social and religious activities of the people. There are a few villages in Midnapur which are exclusively inhabited by the Lodhas, like Sankaridanga, Birkar, Patli and Talai. Other villages under survey are more or less inhabited by mixed castes and tribal groups. In villages where the Lodhas live in small numbers, they are subject to the rule and mandates of the formal or informal council of the village, whether it has in it their own community members or not. But in respect of social and ceremonial matters peculiar to their own group, they follow exactly the same patterns as observed by their own community living in the neighbouring villages. This is strictly adhered to in respect of funeral and marriage ceremonies or ceremonies connected with the worship of certain deities. For instance, in Saldanga, only three Lodha families live, while in Kasipur, there are six such families. . The former is tied with Kukai and the latter who originally came from Ma-Mansa, with their place of migration, in matters of observance of social and religious ceremonies.

Administration of justice, settlement of disputes amongst individuals, families, and sometimes even villages, maintenance of peace and promotion of social welfare, are some of the functions of the village council. These functions are performed by a group of people elected as officials to the Council. They also foster the uncodified traditional patterns of social behaviour and cultural trends. Such a Communal or Tribal Council is called a panchayat by the Lodhas. The set-up of a panchayat is more or less same in other villages of the district of Midnapur inhabited by different castes and communities.

On an analysis of the average village panchayat, it will be seen that the different castes and communities living within its territorial limits with their distinct social and economic achievements, have been represented on it according to the weightage of their groupings. In such panchayat organisations, we find caste hierarchy occupies a privileged position. Authority is generally vested in the hands of those prominent caste members, rather the 'clean' castes, like Brahmans, Kayasthas, Vaidyas, Karans and Mahishyas. Sometimes economic status of a man is taken as a criterion of his desirability to be a member, for a man who is well off economically can wield a greater control over others in the various spheres of the village life. But the Lodhas being backward, both in economic and social status, do not have any voice or control in the village councials. Such conditions exist in a number of Lodha villages like Benadubi where the Kayasthas and the Rajus are the prominent landholding classes, and Ma-Mansa where the Sadgops are the prominent landholders and dominate the decisions of the village councils in all matters. As a result, the backward communities, specially the Lodhas, suffer social and economic disabilities imposed on them by their richer neighbours.

Lodhas look upon themselves as Hindus of low status. The traditional caste occupations of the Hindus which have been prescribed for the various sects have been denied to them. So it may be said that they are rather Hinduised people than Hindus, though the washermen and the barbers who serve other clean caste Hindus, also serve them. But a very few amongst the Lodhas are sometimes found to have a better social status, particularly those who have some special skill or qualities, like the medicineman capable of curing diseases or a priest, whose services are essential for the propitiation of a particular deity. Thus it is found that the snake-charmers who treat the diseases of the local people and exorcise the evil spirits and the *Deheris* or priests who worship the deities or invoke their blessings for communal welfare, receive popular appreciation and are invested with social status.

The villages of Kukai, Sankaridanga, Birkar, Ma-Mansa, Pathardahara, etc. are typical villages having councils of their own formed by prominent Lodhas. The office-bearers or the prominent councillors enjoy special prestige and privileges, which, in many respects, are equal to the honour and respect shown to the members of a panchayat or the *Bāruā* of the higher castes. They receive a present of one *gāi,* i. e. ten betel-nuts and ten betel leaves, as mark of respect when they attend social ceremonies performed by the community. It is they who give permission for marriages or other religious ceremonies. The caste council of the Lodhas has also the right to impose a fine on any one or to boycott him if he commits an offence.

The Lodha caste council has all the grown-up male persons as its members. Children and women are, however, not taken in the council. Besides the usual social officials, religious officials of the Lodhas also play an important role in the discussion of matters connected with the welfare of the community. Justice is administered by these members who sit in judgment in deciding cases of various nature brought before the council. Cases are dealt with according to the traditional tribal norms applied in the context of different situations. They also believe that supernatural or automatic punishments may befall a person who breaks tribal customs. Disobediance of the mandate of the council is taken serious notice of by the panchayat members. Public opinion is the most potent factor in determining social norms.

Establishment of guilt is done by different methods. Generally in a typical panchayat all the grown-up male mem-members are summoned by the village *Dākuā* or bailiff to a particular place, the meeting being presided over by the village headman. Before coming to a final decision, the accused persons are allowed an opportunity to defend themselves. Sometimes witnesses are called in or the accused has to make statements on oath. Sometimes, after taking an oath, if the culprit whose guilt has been established by facts, still pleads innocence, the councillors declare him as the offender and impose on him a suitable fine. Punishment varies according to the nature of offence. Sometimes it is related to the financial capacity of the offender. Adultery, illicit love, witchcraft, practice of black magic, breach of traditional taboos, defiance of the order of the panchayat are generally dealt with by the panchayat with the imposition of varying degrees of punishments, according to the nature of the offence. Besides religious ceremonies or other gatherings, marriage negotiations or feasts also form important part of the discussions in the normal sittings of the panchyat. Sometimes other social offences like keeping of a concubine, extra-marital intimacy, deserting or refusing to maintain one's own wife and children, enticing away a married woman, etc. also are dealt with by the panchayat.

The panchayat punishes an offender, levies fines, orders punitive feasts and in very serious cases ostracises a man from the community or the village.

The following officials are generally found in a typical Lodha village. All the members are required to be present in the meetings of the panchayat which are generally presided over by the headman or *mukhiā*.

Office Bearers of the Panchayat

There are three important office-bearers of the Lodha-caste panchayat.

They are:—

(i) *Mukhiā*—the headman of the village, and

(ii) *Dākuā* or *Ātghariā*—the village messenger or bailiff.

Sometimes he is called *Kotāl* as he invariably belongs to the Kotāl clan. He has also to perform some other ceremonies associated with marriage and funeral.

(iii) *Parāmānik*—or village cook for the ceremonies.

Mukhiā

All the adult male members of the Lodha village constitute the village panchayat. It sits when an aggrieved person lodges a complaint or when some one breaks the customary rules. When a complaint is lodged with the Mukhiā, he consults some of the important members of the council and asks the Dakuā to convene a meeting at the village shrine of goddess *Sitalā* or at his own house, whatever might seem convenient. The persons involved in the case are then summoned and the trial is held by the panchayat. The Mukhiā holds the highest position and is unquestionably obeyed by others. But if he himself commits an offence, he may be dismissed by the panchayat. Bipin Mallik, aged about 55, of Kukai was a Mukhiā. One Debendra, a resident of the same village, brought a divorced woman from Karangabari and kept her as his concubine. Laksmipriya, the wife of Debendra, brought a complaint against her husband before the panchayat. But the accused somehow secured the support of Bipin Mallik. The panchayat, however, found Debendra guilty and Bipin was dismissed from his high post for shielding an offender. In every marriage ceremony the Mukhiā is presented with one *gāi*, i.e. ten betel-nuts and ten betel leaves, as a mark of honour and the marriage negotiations are settled in his presence as a very important witness. Among the Lodhas, bride price is paid in cash on a brass plate to the bride's mother in the presence of the members of the panchayat or the Mukhiā. The latter also asks his messenger to call the adult male members of the village to muster at a certain place at the time of holding a religious festival. He raises subscriptions and acts as the treasurer. With the help of the village priest, and others, he purchases articles for the worship and keeps proper accounts of funds so raised and spent.

In Kadamdiha, Makra Bhakta, aged 85, is the headman. Once he helped the police in detecting a thief. The accused had absconded but was arrested subsequently through the assistance of the Mukhiā. During the worship of *Barām* he was seen collecting subscriptions. He received 50 naye paise as the Mukhiā *Mānya* (royalty for his honour) on the occasion of a marriage ceremony of Dharma Bhakta's daughter, besides his usual dues of ten betel leaves and ten betel-nuts. After the *Sambar* or chief conductor of marriage ceremony had tied the sacred thread round the united hands of the bride and bridegroom, he gave his consent on behalf of the villagers to the performance of the marriage.

In Ma-Mansa, Bhuban Kotal, aged 48, works as the headman in place of Surendra Bhakta, who had succeeded his father as Mukhiā but was compelled to resign on account of incompetence. In Karangabari, Paban Bhakta, aged 75, being the headman, works as such, with all the responsibilities which are supposed to be discharged by a headman.

In Dihipur, Sarat Nayek, aged 45, works as the village headman. He had been elected to this office after it was vacated by Rasik Ahari who also proved to be incompetent. In Birkar, Tahasil Ahari, aged 56, has been acting as the headman since the death of his father Biswanath Ahari.

Thus it is evident that the village council or panchayat may exercise its authority in removing a Mukhiā if necessary. The Mukhiās are generally well-off persons having a strong common sense in dealing with village affairs. Now almost all the Mukhiās of Kadamdiha, Sankaridanga, Ma-Mansa, Birkar, Dihipur, Daharpur and Karangabari, have been entrusted with the charge of management of several primary schools established recently in the above villages through the initiative of the writer.

If a visitor or an outsider comes to the village, he is generally taken to the Mukhiā who speaks to him all about certain misdoings of the strangers in order to give him an indirect warning. Police officers also request the Mukhiās to help them in the detection of thieves and criminals who might take shelter in the villages.

None of the Mukhiās of the villages mentioned was found to have committed a crime or has ever been declared a criminal in the police records except one Hatiram of village Talai under P. S. Sankrail.

Dākuā or Ātghariā

The *Dākuā* or *Ātghariā* (literally meaning the foremost man among eight families) is the messenger and calls the villagers for a sitting of the panchayat when it is held. He is also a very respected person in the Lodha community. He has to perform some important functions in connection with marriages. In Kukai, Gour Kotal, the Dakuā, had an earthen platform constructed within a marriage booth. He also tied the ceremonial thread, locally called *Bidhi*, on the right wrist of the bridegroom before marriage. He asked the consent of the headman and other assembled villagers, collectively called *Desh* or 'inhabitants of the country' for the marriage. Then he conducted the bride to the left side of the bridegroom who had already been seated on the earthen platform. Just after wedding, the Dakuā dug a pit called *Pukhur* or 'tank' and both the bride and the bridegroom were made to stand in front of it. He then bathed the couple by pouring water on them.

The Dakuā has thus many functions to perform especially in connection with a marriage. He also receives one *gai*, i.e. ten pieces of betel-nuts and ten betel leaves as a sort of royalty on such occasions. He is presented in addition, with a piece of new cloth dyed yellow and 0·25 nP. to 0·50 nP. in cash if he acts as the chief conductor of the ceremony.

During the celebration of the second marriage the village messenger shows the flowers, in keeping with the traditions, to the couple. He collects these flowers well before the celebration. It is one of his basic responsibilities.

In Kadamdiha, Kushu Mallik is the messenger. Before him, Duari Kotal held this office. Duari should have been succeeded by his son, but as the latter, named Nanda, was then a school boy, Kushu Mallik was elected in his place by the villagers. In Sankaridanga, Pachu Kotal is the village messenger. In Ma-Mansa, Maheswar Kotal held this office, but he resigned on account of his continued illness and his cousin Bankim Kotal was elected in his place. In Dihipur, Puti Kotal was the messenger but he also resigned on account of illness and Madhab Bhakta succeeded him.

Thus it is clear that the office of the Dakuā or village messenger is not governed by the rule of heredity. But in the majority of the villages this office is held by a man of the Kotal clan.

Parāmānik

There are one or more professional cooks of the same community living in a village. They are engaged for ceremonial cooking. They are called Parāmāniks. In Kukai, Ram Kotal, Gour Kotal, Gobardhan Nayek are the cooks. At the time of a wedding ceremony, one of them is generally engaged to cook for the wedding feast. On the occasion of the marriage of Beni, a daughter of the late Aghore Mallik, Ram Kotal cooked for the feast. All the ceremonial cooks are entitled to a royalty of one *Gāi*. i.e. 10 betel-nuts and 10 betel leaves and in the above instance Ram Kotal was paid Re. 1/- in lieu of the usual present of a piece of cloth during such ceremonies.

The post of the ceremonial cook is not hereditary. The headman, after consultation with the panchayat, may appoint a new person in place of the existing functionary.

CASES DEALT WITH BY A CASTE PANCHAYAT

Case No. I

Ram Ahari of Pathardahara has a brother-in-law living in the same village named Rakhal Ahari, aged 30, who fell in love with a divorced woman named Sari, aged 30, of the same village. Being afraid of punishment that the panchayat might impose on him, he eloped with the woman to

Manoharpur, 16 miles away. But after a few years, due to extreme penury, he had to come back accompanied by the woman and two children who had been born in the meantime. The panchayat indicted him and levied a fine of Rs. 1.25 for the commission of adultery and a goat for punitive feast of the community. He admitted his guilt and promised to pay the fine and a goat at the earliest opportunity, which he did later on.

Case No. 2

Sriram Kotal of the same village, aged 42, eloped with Mukti, wife of one Gutul of an adjoining village. He shifted to village Pathardahara and lived with Mukti there. The panchayat fined him Rs. 2/- which he did not, however, pay. The panchayat thereafter gave him a warning and ordered that he be boycotted until he apologised for the delay in the payment of the fine.

Case no. 3

In Ma-Mansa, there was a quarrel between Bhuban Kotal and Nakphuri Bhakta. Bhuban suspected Nakphuri of having illicit relation with his wife. Nakphuri's wife had given Bhuban this information about her own husband. Later on when the quarrel broke out, Bhuban's wife however denied the fact. The parties at quarrel appealed to the village panchayat to probe into their grievances and to take punitive action against the guilty. The panchayat sat at the shrine of the deity Sitalā. The meeting was convened by the village messenger. First of all, Bhuban submitted a general statement of facts leading to the quarrel, but Nakphuri totally denied the charges. The panchayat then asked him to take an oath. Nakphuri touched the mat spread on the floor on which the village elders sat and gave his statement on oath refuting the charges. Yet none believed him. Consequently, Nakphuri was fined Rs. 6/- which he paid to the headman who directed that this money be spent for the common village festivals.

Case no. 4

In the same village, one day, while one Guna Kotal was sitting in his courtyard engaged in domestic work, a woman named Kunti Dasi happened to be passing by. All on a sudden Guna's wife shouted at her husband 'Do you want to finish your work or be at it for the whole day? I see you have become a devotee of the goddess *Mā-Sitalā*, pointing her forefinger to Kunti suggestively in an extreme fit of anger. Kunti heard the remark and lodged a complaint before the headman who at once directed the messenger to call the panchayat on a fixed date at the village shrine. The accused and the complainant were examined by the panchayat, who held Guna Kotal's wife guilty of making indiscreet remark about Kunti. She was fined Rs. 1.25 which she paid immediately to the headman. She also apologised to Kunti at the bidding of the panchayat.

Case no. 5

One Suren Bhakta, the headman of Ma-Maṇsa desired to marry a sister of Nitai Lodha of the same village. But Nitai did not like the proposal. There was an exchange of hot words and Nitai insulted the headman. For his temerity of defying the headman, he was summoned to a sitting of the village panchayat and fined ten rupees. Nitai fled to Kashipur, a village about a mile off, and stayed there to settle permanently. He soon became a favourite of the other caste-communities of Kashipur because of the cheap labour and the services he rendered them, and so he could live happily there. But he was faced with a rather intriguing situation within a short time. One Nitai Chandra, a Raju by caste, had forged an illicit intrigue in the meantime with Nitai Lodha's unmarried sister which culminated in her shameful pregnancy. It is reported that Nitai Chandra took all possible measures for causing an abortion, but without any effect. In due course, she gave birth to a male child. Nitai Chandra was fined Rs. 300/- by the caste panchayat of village Kashipur. At the same time the Lodha caste-council of village Ma-Mansa boycotted Nitai Lodha, which meant a boycott by the members of his caste in all the surrounding villages. He, however, continued to live with his sister and her child peacefully, mainly through the help, sympathy and co-operation of the villagers of Kashipur who belonged to other castes.

Another case was dealt with by the village panchayat of Birkar where one Kandru Kotal, aged 45, was suspected of practising witchcraft and was thought to be responsible for killing a few children in some neighbouring villages. This case has been recorded in detail elsewhere in this monograph.

Recently there has been a change in the composition as well as activities of the panchayats of different villages. The village Kukāi specially is now under a group of social workers and some upliftment works are conducted there for the betterment of the Lodhas. The most striking thing about the village council here is that in its fortnightly sittings, all the grown-up men and women participate in the discussions on social or religious problems and suggest solutions as occur to them. Once an elderly woman was found to indulge in illicit union with a man much below her age. The matter was reported to the village panchayat. Only the female members of the village council met on this occasion and dealt with this case, and the woman was seriously rebuked and warned. In none of the Lodha villages except Kukai in this district, are women found to participate in the panchayats.

The village panchayats were previously the sole arbiters of local disputes, but now-a-days some villagers are reported to have lodged complaints with the local Police against some other villagers with whom they have disputes. Kafan Mallik of Metial had several such complaints made against him by his co-villagers of the Lodha community to the local Police Officer. Abinash Digar of Sankaridanga lodged another complaint with the Police against his co-villagers, who, as alleged by him, severely tortured him on suspicion that he was a member of the gang which had committed dacoity there.

Now, there is a growing tendency to seek redress through the intervention of the Police instead of reporting the cases of local disputes to the Union panchayat or the members of the Union Board.[10] This break in the tradition is a positive sign of disintegration of the older communal organisation. Again, due to intensive activities of different political parties in this area of late, the villagers are becoming partisans and take advice from one party or another in their personal and social problems, such as the Congressmen, the Communists, etc. The parties too, in order to get their support in elections, try to do as much as they can to help them even by lodging complaints on their behalf with the Police or by filing suits in a court of law. An instance of this kind was noted in Kukāi where the dismissed headman Bipin Mallik is now working as an active member of the local Congress Committee and the rest of the villagers do not support him for his partisan activities. Now a system of village panchayat is going to be introduced all over West Bengal on the basis of adult franchise and the caste panchayats, so long in vogue, are gradually curbing their spheres of activities.

In different places of Midnapur, in times of acute distress, Government have begun to distribute dry doles or provide test relief works to the affected people as a matter of policy, thus ensuring indirectly a minimum scope for employment. A few of the many Lodha villages also get this benefit secured through the influence of some Union Board members who happen to belong to different political parties of the locality. Thus Lodhas have come in contact with them, specially of the villages like Dihipur, Karangabari, Benadubi, etc. and gradually have been influenced by them too. It is clear therefore that the fabric of the primitive caste and community organisations has been reshaping itself with the change of time under economic and political impacts.

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[10] A few villages constitute one Union ; thus in a Police Station there are 10 to 20 Unions.

In the village panchayats of the Lodhas the prominent members are the Mukhiās and the Dākuās. But there are other important persons like the Deheri, Ṭaliā Chhaṛidār and Gunni or the medicineman. At the time of discussion of a matter in a panchayat, all of them command high respect and their views are regarded as the best counsel. A detailed account of the functions of such persons is given below.

Religious Officials

There are several religious and ceremonial officials in the Lodha Caste. Their voice in a village council is considered very weighty in matters of deciding the cases referred to it. They are as follows:—

(i) *Deheri* or village priest, (ii) *Ṭaliā* or *Chharidār*, i.e. assistant to the village priest, (iii) *Hantakār* or official sacrificer, (iv) *Gunni*, the medicineman, (v) *Byakrā* of Shaman or spirit-possessed man who is supposed to be able to forecast future events.

Deheri

Generally each village has a Deheri or priest, who worships the village gods and goddesses.. He is held in great respect by the community. In the performance of religious ceremonies he may be sometimes assisted by the assistant priest. Before the celebration of a worship, such as the worship of *Sitalā* or *Barām*, he asks the headman to collect funds and prepares a list of articles to be proferred to the deity on the occasion. He goes to the market himself with the list and purchases the needed articles and brings them to the shrine. If there is no permanent shrine, the priest keeps the articles in his own custody. The worship of the deities is performed by the priest who is exclusively a religious functionary.

In Jaralata, Mathur, aged 60, is the present priest. In Mahischhar Suren is the priest, having succeeded his father in this office. In Dihipur, the priest named Roy Bhakta, also succeeded his father. In Birkar, the priest is one Hriday Paramanik who has also succeeded his father like the former.

In Ma-Mansa, Phadi is the present priest. He succeeded his father Shrimanta, the office being a hereditary one. At the time of this survey, Phadi was seen conducting a marriage ceremony, which is not the stipulated function of a Deheri, in imitation of the rituals observed by the local Hindus. He tied the sacred thread round the unified palms of the couple and received 50 naya paise as his dues for the service. The village messenger did not do this though this is their official function elsewhere. He was observed to propitiate Mother Earth (*Basumātā*) and God of Righteousness (*Dharam Devatā*) on that occasion.

Thus it is obvious that everywhere in the Lodha community the post of Deheri is a hereditary one. It is not exclusively confined to any particular clan. Where a person has more sons than one, the fittest among them is appointed as priest. Fitness for holding this office is determined by oil divination which, the Lodhas believe, help choose the right man.

Suren Mallik, aged 40, of Mahischhar is the present priest of the village. He is the second of his three brothers. After the death of his father, the sons and the villagers assembled together and arrangements were made for oil divination for the choice of the priest. The method is known as *Telpānjā*. Three *sāl* leaves were brought and placed one each before each of the three brothers. The mustard oil was dropped on each leaf in succession, each being then folded and stitched with a thorn. After saluting the deity Barām, the leaves were opened one after the other. Each leaf was examined closely in the presence of the assembled villagers and the drop of oil was seen remaining intact only on the leaf given to Suren, the second brother, while the drops on the other leaves were spread out on the surface. It was thus proved that the deity Barām, according to the Lodha convention, was pleased with Suren who thus succeeded his father.

The panchayat has no right to interfere with the appoint- or dismissal of a Deheri. When a Deheri dies without an heir, one from outside the family is requested to act as the Deheri of that particular village, as was seen in Sankaridanga.

In Ma-Mansa, the shrine of Barām is situated in the midst of the jungle, a place popularly called *Chākātalā*. A fair takes place there on the last day of the month of Pous (December-January) every year. In the year 1953 about 50 goats were sacrificed there. All these goats were offered to the deity by different clean castes and other communities. The priest of that particular village is highly respected as the shrine is famous all over the surrounding countryside.

When there is a sacrifice, the priest gets the head of the sacrificed animal. If the number of sacrifice is more than one, he usually distributes the heads of the sacrificed animals to the villagers in order of their social precedence.

Before a wedding ceremony, a present of ten betel-nuts and ten betel leaves is made to the priest as in the case of the headman or the bailiff described earlier. He is sometimes given a cash present.

Besides the usual Deheri of each Lodha village, there is a special Deheri for the goddess *Chandi*. She resides generally in the jungle and no image is made of her. Small terracotta horses and elephants are seen scattered beneath a tree which is regarded as her shrine.

In Kukāi, there is a shrine of *Duāsini Chandi* under a date-palm tree at some distance from the village. Fowl and goats are sacrificed to her. The sacrifice and propitiation are performed by a special Deheri of a social status inferior to that of the conventional Deheri of this village. He is never paid any royalty or *gāi*, i.e. presentation of betel leaves and betel-nuts at the time of a nuptial ceremony. Indra Nayek of Kukai was the Deheri of Chandi. After his death his brother Duari Nayek succeeded him. He now lives at Rangtia, a village two miles north of Kukāi. The post of this particular Deheri is restricted to this family alone. The Deheri of Chandi does not hold any important position in the ceremonial life of the Lodhas.

In Kadamdiha, there is one Chandi known as Joychandi, Kalu Paramanik is the Deheri of this deity. He has succeeded his father.

In Pitalkanthi, under the Police Station of Sankrail, there is also a famous Chandi named Joychandi of which one Hatiram is the priest. He has succeeded his father as usual. According to Hatiram, once when his grand-father was working as priest, a conflict took place among the Lodhas and the other caste Hindus with regard to the worship of the goddess. The upper caste people offering worship regularly there appointed one Brahman in place of the then priest. Such a thing had never happened before. Consequently, the Lodhas felt aggreived, but being helpless, they abandoned themselves to the marcy of the goddess. One night the dismissed priest heard in a dream that the goddess Joychandi would leave the place for the village Chandanpur near Bardanga and would accept worship there from him alone. So the priest went to Chandanpur the next morning and since that day the village Pitalkanthi had begun to lose its importance. Soon after, representatives of all the caste communities, including the upper castes, brought the priest back and a compromise was effected, so that the Brahman priest could work in co-operation with the Deheri in the worship of Joychandi.

The Deheri of Joychandi enjoys special prestige and privileges. He was found to perform .a few worships of the goddess Sitalā as priest among the untouchables and tribal folk, like the Santals, in the vicinity.

The Deheri of Kultikri also is an important member of the local caste panchayat. He is also a member of the High School Committee.

Taliā or Chharidār

Next to the Deheri of the village, the *Taliā* or *Chharidār* is an important religious official who assists the priest in discharging religious services on festive occasions. His principal function is to make ready the offerings for the deity and arrange the earthen lamps which are lit on the occasion with mustard oil, the incense bowl and all other requisite items. He also makes preliminary arrangements for the sacrifices. He fixes up the sacrificial stake or post into which the animal's neck is fixed during the sacrifice.

In Ma-Mansa, Dasarathi Nayek works as the assistant priest. During worship he gets nothing except a small quantity of meat. But when a personal sacrifice is offered, the assistant priest gets 50 naya paise for each goat and in the case of fowl, 12 naya paise only for his services.

In Karangabari, Rajendra Bhakta is the assistant priest. In Birkar, Shishu Nayek is the assistant priest who succeeded his father to the post.

In Sankaridanga, Panchu Sing is the assistant priest. In Kukāi, Jiten Mallik is the assistant priest. In the same village, once two goats were offered for the sacrifice to the goddess Sitalā by one Ram Digar who made a vow to offer them if he were cured of the piles which almost killed him. The assistant priest was presented with 50 naya paise for each sacrificed animal. During village worships he gets an extra share of meat. Previously, in the same village, Abinash Bhakta was the assistant priest. When he became invalid due to age, the villagers elected Jiten in his place.

The assistant priest like the priest himself does not get the *gāi* or honorary presentation of betel-nuts and betel leaves in marriage ceremonies. Assistant priests are recruited from any clan and remain in office as long as they are able to perform their duties. No oil divination is done for the election of assistant priests which is supposed to secure supernatural sanction, as in the case of the priests. The assistant priest is an influential man of the village panchayat and advises on the fixation of religious programmes.

Hantakār

Hantakār or the official sacrificer of the sacrificial animals is another important person in the religious organisation of the Lodhas. In communal festivals, the sacrificer gets an extra share of meat and in case of personal offerings, he gets Re. 1/- as fee for each sacrifice. In Ma-Mansa, Surendra Bhakta, aged 42, is the official sacrificer. He succeeded his father. In Kukāi, Jajneswar Nayek is the official sacrificer. He succeeded his cousin Nepal Nayek after the latter's death.

The sacrificer is generally recruited from one particular family. If a suitable person is not available in the family another may be recruited in his place from another family or some neighbouring village.

Once at Ma-Mansa, there arose some misunderstanding between the official sacrificer and the villagers. The panchayat dismissed him from his post and appointed another man in his place. But the newly appointed person was found to be inefficient. He decapitated an animal in a particular worship just after his appointment, after having applied as many as five strokes of the weapon instead of the usual one prescribed. The villagers took this as an indication of the unwillingness of the goddess to change the existing official sacrificer and Surendra had to be re-appointed.

The official sacrificer does not receive any special honour as in the case of Mukhiā, Deheri or Dakuā.

Gunni

In a Lodha village there are one or more *Gunnis* or Medicinemen who practise divination when a serious disease or epidemic breaks out. They are supposed to be able to drive away evil spirits (*Bhuts* and *Prets*) from the village by uttering incantations. They apply the same method in the case of snake bite while catching snakes. Medicinemen are supposed to operate with the help of several supernatural heroes, locally called *Veers* whom they worship with sacred formulas. They administer some medicinal roots or herbs for the treatment of diseases caused by ghosts and evil spirits. The medicinemen deal blows on the ears of patient or gives him an amulet in order to drive away the evil spirits. He is also supposed to be able to save a man or animal from the clutches of a witch. Thus he enjoys a position of importance not only among the Lodhas but also in other communities.

In Kukāi, Hari Bhakta aged 48 is a famous medicine-man and he is reputed to have cured various diseases. In Kadamdiha, Dharam Bhakta, aged 46, knows the art of magical treatment. He has command even over the *Chirguni*, a dangerous ghost of a woman who died during child-birth. The services of the Chirguni ghost can also be utilised by him in driving away other ghosts dwelling in the locality. He is held in high respect by his own castemen as well as by others belonging to various communities.

Occasionally the medicinemen have a large number of apprentices or *Chelās* who take lessons in magical practices from them every Tuesday or Saturday. When a disciple becomes well-versed in the magical art, he gets a certificate from his master. But until the latter gives him a special incantation for *Mukh-Kholā*, i.e. mouth-opener, he is not entitled to start independent practice. On the termination of the apprenticeship, the preceptor is presented with a piece of new cloth by each of his disciples. The details of the special functions of the Gunni have been discussed elsewhere in this monograph.

The post is never hereditary. It is through personal aptitude that a man becomes a Gunni.

Byakrā

There are several persons in a Lodha village who happen to be easily possessed by spirits. They lose consciousness at the time of the ceremonial dance and spontaneously shake their heads from side to side with increasing vehemence until they fall into a trance. The monotonous sound produced by the *Chāngal*, which is a sort of flat drum, perhaps helps in bringing about the trance. In such a condition, the man who is known as *Byakrā* or Shaman or spirit-possessed man, can foretell the future or denote the causes of epidemics among men and animals when they break out in the villages. He has to take a long course of training from a competent preceptor before he becomes a qualified practitioner.

In Kukai, there are several Shamans who are all disciples of Hari Bhakta and are undergoing a rigid course of apprenticeship. These Shamans get no special social consideration during the social and religious ceremonies, but are respected by the villagers if they could foretell the future correctly.

Sometimes these Shamans are invited by the other castes like the Bagals and the Koras of the locality for making forecasts in certain matters in which they are interested.

On the whole it may be said that the Lodha caste organisations are in a state of change, and these are more or less confined to the socio-religious spheres riddled with a variety of problems. Due to the influence of diverse political parties and the propaganda that they are now carrying on amongst the Lodhas, they are moulding themselves according to the nature of the forces at play. As a result they are being more and more attached to parties and individuals who sympathise with their cause and give them various suggestions for their welfare. They have been so much won over by such campaigns, that they would lodge a complaint against someone to the Union Board or the local police if asked to do so by a so-called influential political leader who preaches amongst them as described before.

To sum up, the important persons of the Lodha village organisation are the following. To discuss a problem or to hold an office, these persons would require public support or supernatural mandate in their favour. Only the panchayat has the authority to dismiss any of the social officials.

(1)	(2)	(3)
Mukhiā	Gunni	Deheri
Dakuā or Ātgharia	Byakrā	Taliā Chharidār
Parāmānik		Hantakār
for	for	for
(social problems requring public opinion).	(supernatural problems requiring supernatural blessings through direct communion).	(religious problems requiring supernatural sanction).

The religious officials or the supernatural diviners also enjoy some social prestige when they are requested to render help to the people of other communities. They may be socially ranked high according to the nature of services they render. There is no trace of inter-village panchayat organisation among the Lodhas.

CHAPTER VII

MAGICO-RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The Lodhas, like some of their rural neighbours, believe in the mysterious powers possessed by certain objects and persons. These powers are either maleficent or beneficent, and the earth all around is teeming with them. The Lodhas also believe in the existence of spirits influencing certain actions in their lives and to appease them they perform certain rites during such critical periods of life as pregnancy, birth, marriage and death. In their economic life also they observe some magico-religious ceremonies to counter the influence of evil spirits or exorcise *bhuts* or ghosts. Frequent examples are observed in fields growing vegetables or other crops in the Police Stations of Narayangarh, Dantan and Kesiari where they generally stick a worn-out shoe on a pole or set an old earthen pot painted with lime or place the skull of a cow to avert the evil eye of a sorcerer or a witch. The ghosts of persons who have died an unnatural death are considered to be particularly harmful. In rural Midnapur, there are spirit-doctors called *Ojhā* or *Gunni*, who are able to exercise control over spirits and ghosts.

When an accident takes place or ill luck pursues a person, the *Ojhā* or spirit-doctor is called in for divination and suggesting remedies in the form of spells, charms and amulets.

Besides such beliefs in the spirit world, the Lodhas also recognise different gods and goddesses to whom prayers, offerings or sacrifices are made. Like the *Ojhā*, there is another important functionary called the *Deheri*, who attends to those deities in their shrines.

Although the Lodhas there believe in propitiating or counteracting the influence of various inhabitants of the spirit world, and although they believe that life is largely controlled by such spirits, yet a small number of them realise the potency of human effort and industry which is at the root of prosperity and happiness. But in most cases, these various beliefs are mixed up in the minds of the average Lodha.

Lodhas have been described as Hindus in various Census Reports, but their exact position in the caste system has not been explained. A detailed analysis of their religious beliefs and practices reveal that a process of Aryanisation is prevalent among them, while some of their deities are gradually being incorporated in the pantheon of their upper class Hindu neighbours.

For the collection of data in respect of these magico-religious beliefs and practices current among the Lodhas, the writer interviewed seventy informants belonging to all social and economic strata distributed in 31 villages. Detailed records for one whole year were secured in the case of 78 families inhabiting four villages to find out what is done during illness and other crises in life. These are also included towards the end of the present chapter.

Classification

Supernatural spirits, according to popular belief, are generally invisible though they might become visible when they wish. The spirits, like human beings, are subject to emotions and desires, but they do not seem to be subject to moral laws.

Spirits may be classified according to their attributes. Some of these are of benevolent nature, such as *Basumātā* (Mother Earth), *Dharam Devatā* (God of Righteousness), etc., while others are malevolent. Few Lodhas could give an accurate description of the features and attributes of gods like *Dharam Devatā* or *Basumātā*, about whom they have vague notions. They believe however that *Dharam Devatā* commands moral qualities.

The goddesses *Sitalā* and *Chandi* are held in awe and apprehension ; but they can be beneficient when appeased with proper prayers, offerings and sacrifices. *Barām* or *Garām*, the tutelary deity of the village, has also the same attributes and falls in the same category. These spirits are the *Yugini* and other *Bhuts* like *Chirguni*, *Pretāsani*, etc.

Bhagawān or Supreme Being

Although the inhabitants of the unseen world are of many kinds, yet the Lodhas recognise the existence of *Bhagawān* or a Supreme God over all of them. This term as well as the concept are clearly derived from their Hindu neighbours. Bhagawān is regarded as the Supreme Being. He created the universe and all things which live in the earth and heavens. He never demands any sacrifice or worship. Lakshindra Mallik of Kukai holds the faith that by regular prayers and honest living a man of even the lowest status can attain the highest status and enrich his soul with the blessings of Bhagawān. According to him, Ramchandra of the *Rāmāyana* and Shri Krishna of the *Mahābhārata* were incarnations of Bhagawān in different ages.

Basumātā or Mother Earth

Basumātā or Mother Earth is considered to be a very important deity, though she has no recognised anthropomorphic form. She is propitiated with simple prayers along with Dharma Devatā at the time of the marriage ceremony before ceremonial bath is performed after anointment with turmeric paste. She has also no shrine or residence of her own. All persons, male and female, married and unmarried, are entitled to worship or offer obeisance to the deity. According to Makra Bhakta of Kadamdiha it was the goddess Basumātā who gave shelter to the Lodhas. Some of them identify her with the earth and propitiate her with offerings, prayers and flowers as a mark of gratitude.

In several Lodha villages, during a marriage ceremony, the unmarried sisters or village maidens of the bridegroom's place worship Basumātā along with Dharam Devatā. The worshipper does not have to fast. In the marriage booth, the Deheri or the village priest or the Sambar, the chief conductor of the marriage ceremony, makes the bridegroom take oath in the name of Basumātā who is called upon to act as a witness. Any breach of the vows made by the bridegroom to the wife may escape the notice of the people in general but it cannot go unnoticed by Mother Earth or God of Righteousness. Several informants like Paban Bhakta of Karangabari, Ranjani Kotal of Dihipur and Dhunda Singh of Sankaridanga said that Mother Earth never punishes a man, but the person violating the promise automatically suffers. In ceremonies such as the second marriage and orther festivals, Mother Earth is invoked at the initiation. Thus in the Lodha society the worship of Basumātā is a common rite. They have no paticular date fixed for this occasion. She is also invoked before the communal dance which is performed with music.

Dharam Devatā or God of Righteousness

This deity is not an embodied spirit nor any worship or sacrifice is offered to him separately. Like Mother Earth he is worshipped and invoked in all the ceremonial occasions by the Lodhas. He lives in heaven and observes all the deeds of men and animals. So nobody can avoid his watchful eyes. He also weighs the actions of men in the balance and awards gifts or punishments accordingly. He rules over the destiny in this world. He is invoked during the marriage ceremony or before the worship of any particular deity or spirit. The Lodhas have no temple nor any sacred place for this deity. No sacrifices, not even food offerings, are made to him. It is only during the ceremonial bath or a marriage that some sand or mud is piled near the water. One betel leaf is spread near the sand grains and a betel-nut is placed on it. This represents God of Righteousness. Vermilion marks are made on it. Sometimes a copper coin is offered to him as was observed in course of several marriage ceremonies at Kesiari and Narayangarh. But at Kadamdiha, seven betel leaves and seven betel-nuts were offered during the marriage ceremony of the daughter of Makra Bhakta and others.

The majority of the informants gave confused statements regarding the functions and the form of the God of Righteousness. But it may be said that he is regarded as a powerful god controlling the moral activities of men and as such is worshipped and prayed to by all irrespective of sex and age. He is also invoked at the commencement of ceremonies of various kinds.

The Dharam Devatā of the Lodhas is also invoked before communal dances and other festivals. He is also reckoned as a witness in marriage ceremonies when the following invocation is uttered:—

Upare Dharam Devatā[11]
Tale Basumātā—Tomara Sākshi Raile etc."

That is 'Oh! Dharam Devatā, who art in Heaven, Oh! Basumātā, who art below! Ye are the witnesses of this ceremony, etc.'

Sitalā

Sitalā is considered to be the chief deity of the Lodhas. She is worshipped with awe and fear as she is the controlling deity of epidemic diseases like cholera, small-pox and the like. But even so, they believe that if proper prayer, worship and sacrifices are offered, she becomes pleased and proves to be benevolent.

Sitalā is worshipped once, twice or thrice a year as the case may be. In villages like Kukai, Khejurkuthi, Rangtia and Kesiari proper, she is worshipped thrice a year, once on the last day of *Chaitra* (March-April), then on a day in

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[11] This type of invocation is also prevalent among the Juangs and Kharias of Orissa.

Vaishāk (April-May), and lastly, on a Saturday or Tuesday in *Māgh* (January-February), in the lunar fortnight.

In the villages Ma-Mansa, Kasipur, Daharpur and Birkar, she is worshipped twice, once in the month of *Vaisākh* and then in the month of Māgh. In Parulda, she is normally worshipped thrice a year. An extra worship is sometimes held in this village during the *Durgā Astami* in the month of *Asvin* (September-October).

In the Jhargram Sub-division, specially in Kadamdiha, Pathardahara, Nayagram and Damdasol, she is worshipped twice a year. At Sankaridanga she is worshipped thrice.

A sudden outbreak of epidemic diseases like cholera, small-pox, etc. causes the people to worship goddess Sitalā any number of times in addition to her usual worship. An emergency worship like this was held in Kukai in the year 1954 when the children of the village suffered from a severe epidemic of measles. This was done in the month of *Chaitra* with less pomp and grandeur.

The deity resides in the shrine which is locally called the *Thān* or *Māro*. Several villages have such shrines as were found in villages like Kukai, Birkar, Karangabari, Pathardahara, etc. There the shrines were rectangular with mud walls and thatches of straw. There is only one door for each shrine facing the east. Several such shrines in Kukāi and Birkar and Pathardahara were found to have roofs while a few others were without any roofs whatsoever. Temporary sheds used as shrines are found in the villages of Sankaridanga, Rangtia, Khejurkuthi, Simuldanga, Kadamdiha, Damdasol, Bagmuri, Ma-Mansa, Metial and Parulda. These sheds are double sloped, the roof being thatched and serving the purpose of walls too. These huts face the east, the western portion being completely blocked by straw or branches of trees. The shrines are treated as communal property. Inside the hut there is an earthen platform, locally called *Bedi*; there pots filled with water are placed before any worship begins.

Sitalā has got six sisters. They are named after six epidemic diseases in the following order:—

(i) *Kādā Basanta*—a type of small-pox,
(ii) *Lohā Goriā*—a fatal type of small-pox turning the body black,
(iii) *Bainchā* or chicken-pox which resembles *Bainch* fruits (Flacourtia sepiaria),
(iv) *Chāltā Phuliā*—a type of fatal pox resembling *Chāltā* (Dillenia indica) fruits, in which the patient becomes swollen and dies soon,
(v) *Milmilā* or measles,
(vi) *Olāuthā* or Asiatic tropical cholera.

During the invocation of goddess Sitalā all her sisters are also invoked and prayers are offered to them.

The popular belief is that Sitalā generally looks after the health and wealth of the village, and controls the epidemic diseases. She becomes pleased only if sacrifices, prayers and other offerings are made to her. In case of any serious illness she is also invoked and sometimes the person attacked with an epidemic disease takes a vow to offer her a sacrifice in the hope of recovery. It is also usual to worship Sitalā for cure of barrenness among women. In Hajipur, one Girish Dandapat was without any child for a long time. He promised to offer one he-goat to the goddess Sitalā at Kukāi. After one year his wife gave birth to a male child and Girish kept his vow by offering the promised goat to Sitalā.

Food offering includes uncooked rice, sweets, various kinds of fruits, green cocoanut, milk, *sherbet* or cold drink and betel leaves with nuts.

The worship is done with other associated rites described in the chapter on Festival Cycle (Chapter 8). Sitalā transmutes herself into human form which the villagers claim to have seen occasionally during an epidemic outbreak. Madhab Digar of Kukai is said to have seen her in human form at dead of night near the village shrine. There she stood facing east with a bag in her left hand. She was clad in a white *sāṛi* with red border, and looked like a middle-aged woman. One Bhaja Paramanik of the same village claims to have seen her several times. Generally, she visits her shrine in the late hours of the night for several consecutive days. As she comes out of the shed, the door closes with a bang. Once she came riding on an elephant. The elephant was left near the main road. Next morning the marks of the animal's footprints are said to have been observed by Bhaja and some other villagers.

Jiten of Kukai saw her when his daughter was suffering from measles. The disease gradually subsided on the third day. At dead of night the goddess Sitalā touched Jiten's daughter from head to foot for three times and collected all the germs of the disease in her bag. Then the baby cried out in fear and Jiten woke up. He found to his amazement that her pock-marks were gone.

In Ma-Mansa Srimanta met Sitalā near the forest. Once in the month of *Vaisāk* (April-May) he was returning from the forest when he saw a middle-aged woman waiting, basket in hand, under the shade of a tree. Srimanta went there and found that the woman had innumerable eyes on her head. He bowed down and was told that she was Sitalā. The goddess directed Srimanta not to disclose the matter to anybody. She warned him that if he disclosed this incident to anyone, there would be an outbreak of epidemic in the village. Srimanta could not keep it secret and consequently an epidemic broke out soon after. Twenty persons died of cholera. At last the epidemic subsided with Srimanta's death. According to Bhuban Kotal of Ma-Mansa, Sitalā may occasionally be seen as a girl of 10 or 12 with a stick in hand.

Harekrisna Paramanik of Parulda, said that Sitalā has a *trisul* (trident) or three-pronged iron spear in her right hand.

Shamans also describe the form and features of Sitalā. According to Gobinda of Kukai, she is about 32 years of age, and can traverse any distance within a moment. Sometimes the village priests are able to ascertain and forecast the future by means of divination. Maheswar, the village priest of Kukai kept a flower on a green cocoanut placed upon an earthen pot (symbol of the deity) and said, 'If Thou art pleased then return the flower offered to Thee to my hands'. It the flower rolled down to his hands, it was thought that the deity had been pleased. The worship is observed continuously for three or five days.

In Kultikri, Sitalā has got a permanent shrine. No animal sacrifice is done there. This is due to Vaishnava influence which will be discussed later on.

Barām or Garām

Barām is the tutelary deity of the Lodhas. It is thought to be a powerful deity residing in a sacred grove. It is the deity of the woods. Even today, although the forest is gradually being cleared up, the sacred groves of Barām are kept separate and preserved with the utmost respect. Curiously enough, the Lodhas of village Parulda never worship Barām. The word *Garām* is derived most probably from the word *Grām* meaning a village, or more precisely a village tutelary god. In the Census Report of 1951 a statement has been made to the effect that 'Barām is the Goddess of the Woods worshipped by the Lodhas, Haḍis and Patros'. But from information so far collected by the writer from the Lodhas of different areas, it is clear that Barām is not a goddess at all. Conflicting statements made by different Lodhas of different localities about the conception of Barām are given below.

At Pathardahara, Barām is regarded as the chief deity of the woods. He appears in human form but is taller than average man. His body is covered with long hair all ever. He wears a large moustache. His eyes are usually broad and open. He holds a long axe in his hand. He rides on a tiger or an elephant. At dead of night, cracking and grating sounds are heard from the woods. These sounds are supposed to be produced by the falling tress struck by his exe. If he becomes furious or feels disturbed in course of his nightly spree, tigers may visit the village or elephants may rush into the locality.

When a tiger's roar is heard in the forest, Barām has to be appeased with suitable prayers and sacrifices. According to Makra Bhakta of Kadamdiha, Barām wears a red loin-cloth which is about four cubits in length and one cubit in breadth. This is how the god looked when Makra saw him at dead of night near his home.

According to Bhaja Paramanik of Kulkai, Barām has got a trident in one hand and an iron bangle on the other. Pachu Paramanik of Sankaridanga said that Barām is a mighty deity who saves men from epidemic diseases and appears in dreams to the village priest to foretell the future of the village.

In Pathardahara an interesting incident took place a few years ago. The villagers were regularly hearing the roar of a tiger at dead of night. They became afraid of its depredations and asked the priest whether he had dreamt anything ominous. The village priest said that he had a dream in which Barām wanted to be worshipped. On the seventh day fowl were sacrificed and worship offered and thereafter no roar of the tiger was heard again. A tuft of hair from the tail of the tiger was seen stuck to the tree where Barām was supposed to reside.

Barām is supposed to reside in a grove or a tree near the jungle. In Kukai one big *sāl* tree is believed to be his abode. In Jaralata a *mahuā* tree is Barām's dwelling place. In Sankaridanga, one mango and a small peepal tree are his alternate seats. In Ma-Manasa, Barām inhabits a *sāl* tree. In Khejurkuthi also, the forest being far away, Barām resides in a large *sāl* tree in the woods.

Barām is worshipped on the last day of the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) during the *Jāthel* festival and on the last day of the month of *Paus* (December-January). No festival can commence unless Barām has been invoked. Generally, earthen elephants, horses, etc. are offered at the foot of his abode. Heaps of such earthen horses and elephants were observed in Ma-Manasa, Daijuri, Guptamani and other places where he is regarded as a most powerful deity. On the day of worship the ground near the grove is cleansed with cow-dung. Nine vermilion marks are made on the ground in the name of Barām. Some of the Lodha informants said that the earthen elephant was the symbol of the deity.

The Deheri worships Barām. On the last day of the month of *Chaitra*, a flag is hoisted on the top of the trees in many Lodha villages of Jhargram where Barām resides.

There are also two other kinds of Barāms in the Lodha society. One is called *Dālā Barām* who is generally propitiated by means of *Dālā* or 'branches of a tree', and the other is called *Dhulā Barām* and is propitiated by means of *Dhulā* or 'dust' according to the literal meaning of the term.

Between Kadamdiha and Nayagram Dālā Barām lives near the road. According to Surya Nayek of Baligeria persons passing by the deity show their reverence by throwing some branches of trees upon the spot. Only one piece of stone painted with vermilion signifies the deity. He wants neither worship nor sacrifice. It is believed by the Lodhas that a person refraining from offering such branches in honour of Barām loses his way in the forest.

One Dhulā Barām is found near Kesiari where people offer dust to the deity by means of their toes. The same trouble may be caused if Dhulā Barām is neglected.

Chandi

Chandi is also considered a mighty deity by the Lodhas. Literally the term *Chandi* means 'the terrible one'. In the *Chandi Mangala Kavya*, she has been referred to as the goddess worshipped by the *Vyadha* (hunter) chieftain named Kalketu. According to some, the Vyadhas and the Lodhas (Savaras) have the same origin. In several villages however the goddess Chandi is worshipped by the Lodhas alone. But the names of these Chandis differ. In Pitalkanthi, for instance, the goddess is called *Joychandi* or Chandi of victory. In Kukai she is known as *Duāsini Chandi*. In Ma-Mansa it is known as *Barām Chandi*. Again in Daijuri, Chandi is called *Bhairabi*. At Kadamdiha again, she is named *Joychandi*. The Lodha informants could not give an accurate idea of the features of goddess Chandi. One Madhab Digar of Kukai told the writer that Chandi bears three eyes, one being on the forehead. At night the eyes glow like torches. Once it so happened that Madhab was returning from the field just after sunset along the bank of Bhalukapukur where there is a tree in which Duāsini Chandi resides. Chandi was seen dressing herself. Madhab noticed a ray of light coming out of her eyes and became afraid. On that night, Chandi appeared to him in a dream. She warned him not to go to Bhalukapukur in the evening any more.

Madhab said that she looked like a middle-aged woman. She wore a broad red-bordered *Sāṛi* and several ornaments in her hands. She held an iron trident. When Madhab saw her, she was carrying an earthen vessel with an earthen lid. For a short distance she travelled on foot, but her favourite conveyance is a lion.

According to the statement of Makra of Kadamdiha, she has innumerable eyes on her head. She has a large ring-like nose-ornament and javelin in her arm. Surya Nayek of Baligeria said that Chandi rides a tiger. According to Maheswar Kotal of Ma-Mansa, Chandi appears in various shapes, sometimes as a tall lady of fair complexion and grey hair, and sometimes as a sweet little girl.

Regarding the manifestations of Chandi, none of the informants could give any satisfactory reply. According to some she rules over wild animals, snakes, etc. If she gets annoyed, the letter may do harm to the people. Lakhindra Mallik of Kukai said that she could control serious diseases. When a man suffers from a chronic disease, her blessings are invoked through prayers and vows. After recovery the patient or his relatives have to offer sacrifices etc. One Kungar Saren, a Santal by caste, of Saldanga, vowed to offer one bell and a dish-shaped musical instrument of bell-metal if he would recover from his serious illness as a token of gratitude to Duāsini Chandi of Bhalukapukur. Having recovered, he redeemed his pledge, Haghari Nayek of Kukai said that if the deity becomes displeased with anybody some accident like fit, fainting and blood vomiting is sure to befall him. Some three years back a dancing party from Khejurkuthi came to villaga Kukai on a festive occasion, They passed by without paying heed or homage to the Duāsini Chandi of Bhalukapukur. The party reached the place and began their dance at night. In a few minutes one of the dancers vomitted blood on the spot. They became extremely frightened and called in a Shaman or spirit-possessed man for divination. The spirit-possessed man performed several rites and then said, 'You, dancers have passed through the road paying no respect to me. You neither saluted nor offered music and dance to me, whereas passers-by do the same without exception. Hence this misfortune.'

Then the party prayed, with folded hands, confessed their guilt, and promised to offer one goat next year. Just after this, the sickly person completely recovered. Next year the party duly worshipped the deity and offered a goat in sacrifice.

In Kadamdiha, one large earthen elephant is thought to be the seat of the deity. Fowl and goats are sacrificed to her. Joychandi[12] of Pitalkanthi is installed in a brick-built temple facing the east. It is said that the Lodhas in the jungle used to propitiate the deity, when the Marathas (18th century) proceeded through this part eastward and constructed a brick-built temple there which is now maintained by the villagers of the locality. This deity was famous for her various attributes. A systematic study of six months in respect of the purposes of worship and the communities offering propitiation, reveal that there are 834 worships in all performed by 31 caste and community groups for 16 various purposes of which worships for cure of diseases number 308. Other purposes like winning a football match, etc. are not excluded from the collected data. During that period 267 he-goats were sacrificed. No caste and community members object to the appointment of Lodha Deheri as a priest. A Brahman priest has already been appointed there by the Hindu caste groups of the locality. The Lodha Deheri and the Brahman priest jointly offer worship; sometimes the former alone. Sacrifices are offered by the Lodhas only, while the Doms play the drum. Daily worship is made to her with little sweets. On Tuesdays and Saturdays sacrifices are made by the caste and communities from distant places located as far as 32 miles from the shrine.

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[12] This temple organisation and its relative influence have already been studied by the writer in his article "Four Temples in Midnapur".—*Man in India*, 1960, Vol. 40, No. 2.

Chandi generally resides in a tree in the midst of the jungle as was found at Kadamdiha, Ma-Mansa, Daijuri, etc. and in lonely places elsewhere beneath a tree. In Bhalukapukur, a tree by the side of a solitary tank outside the village, is the place of Chandi. At Kadamdiha and Ma-Mansa and Daijuri, large earthen elephants are kept beneath the trees and the popular belief is that these elephants are the seats of Chandi.

Chandi is worshipped thrice or four times a year, generally at the time of *Makar Sankrānti*, the last day of Paush (December-January), *Chaitra Sankrānti*, the last day of *Chaitra* (March-April), the annual Sitalā worship in the month of *Vaisākh* (April-May), and occasionally during the Jāthel festival. In Kadamdiha no worship of Chandi is performed during the

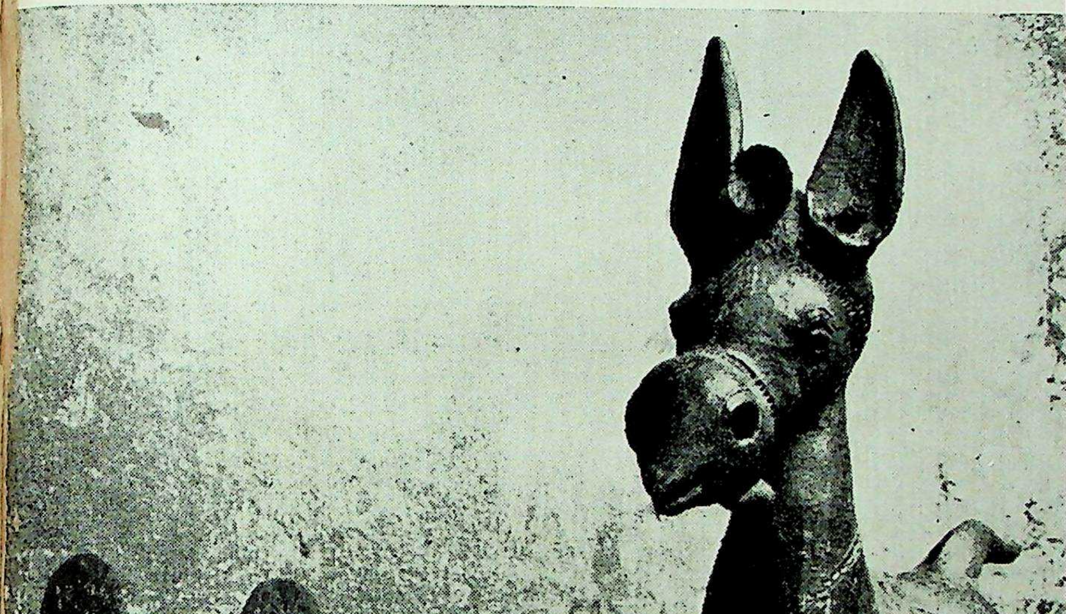

Plate No 8 : An essential part of Lodha, of Religion offerings to Chandi.

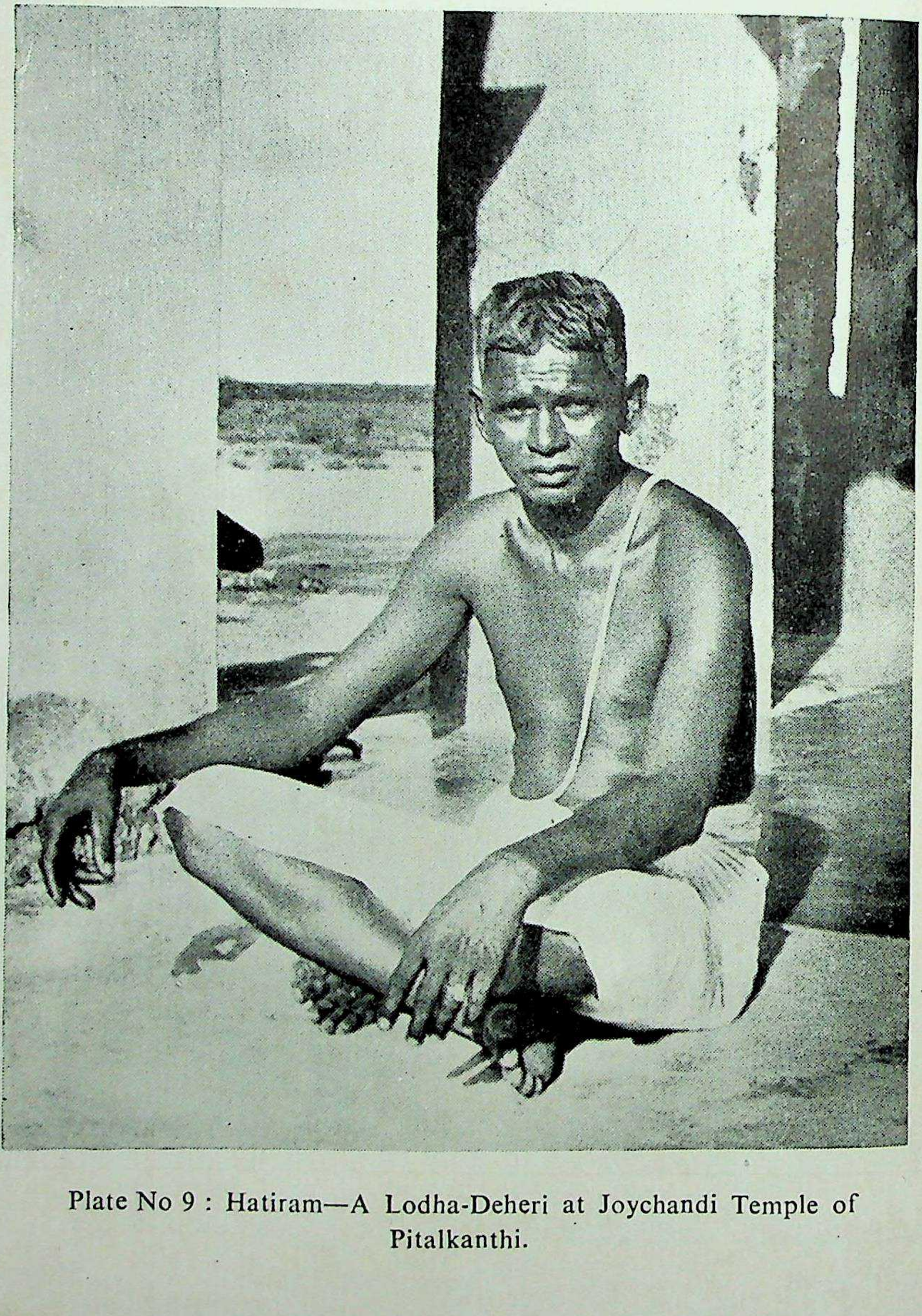

Plate No 9 : Hatiram—A Lodha-Deheri at Joychandi Temple of Pitalkanthi.

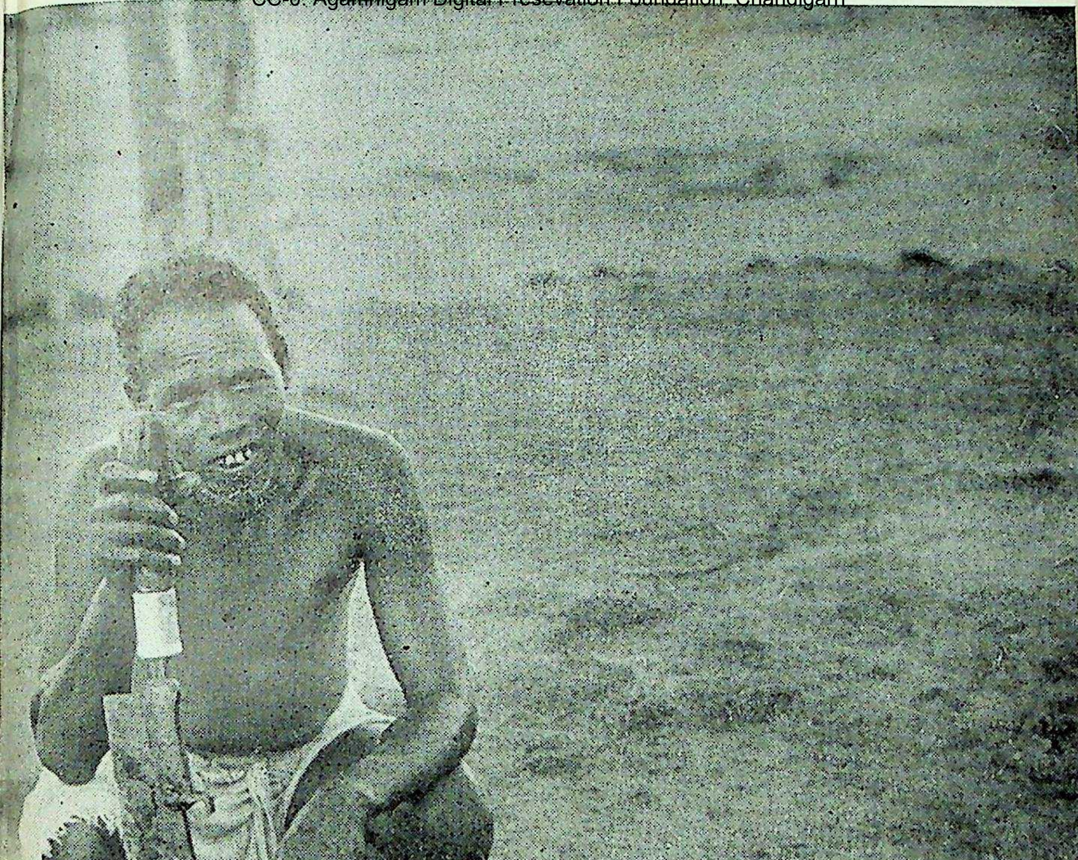

Plate No. 10 : An Official-Sacrificer : Just after sacrificing a goat with a sharp edged weapon.

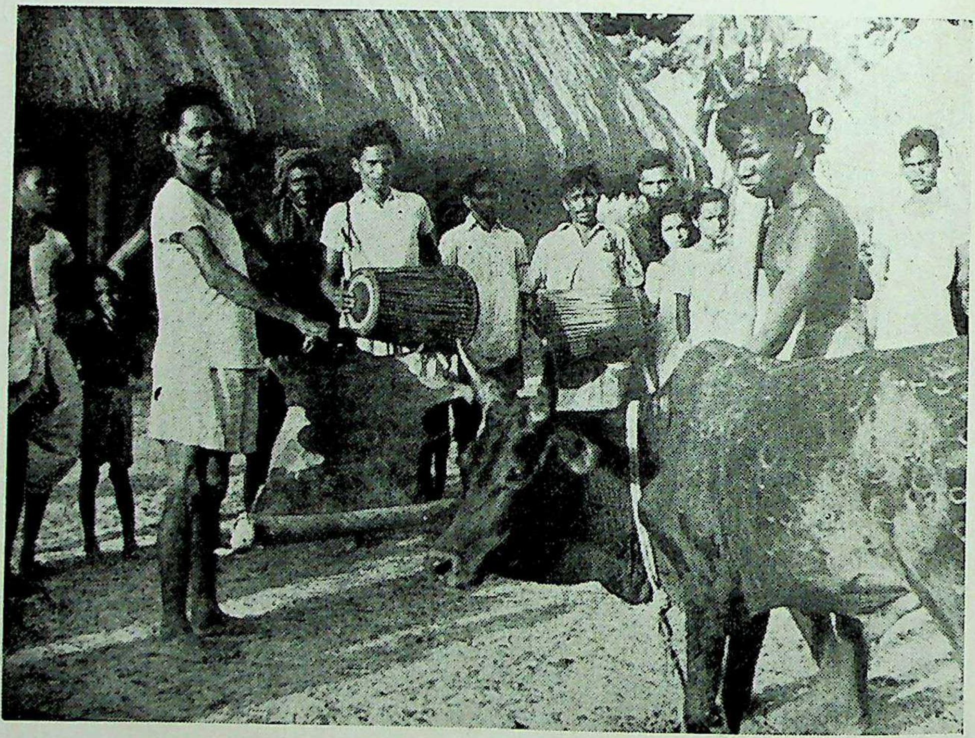

Plate No 11 : A scene of Bāndanā or cattle caressing festival Mahatosana Lodhas—participating.

Jāthel festival. At Pitalkanthi daily offerings of *tulasi* leaves and *durbā* grass with sun-dried rice and a little meat are made to the goddess. During the festival she is offered seasonal fruits, rice and flowers and goats are sacrificed in her name.

Chandi has got separate priests for her worship. In Kadamdiha, Kulu Paramanik is the priest of Chandi. Duari Nayek is the priest of Duāsini Chandi of Bhalukapukur. During the festival he himself sacrifices animals with a sharp-edged weapon locally called *Hālmā*.

Generally, earthen horses, etc. are offered in her name. Almost all shrines of Chandi are full of such offerings. But of all these the seat of Chandi at Ma-Mansa looks like a hillock with horse and elephants massed in large numbers. People belonging to various castes of the neighbourhood offer sacrifices to her.

Yugini

Yugini is the most dreaded of all spirits. She is one of the maids of the goddess Sitalā. When Sitalā is displeased or enraged, visitations of epidemic diseases like cholera, small-pox, etc. occur. It is believed that Yungini retains the souls of those who die during an epidemic. She is even supposed to relish the corpses of her victims. She is therefore very much dreaded by the Lodhas.

Regarding her identity opinions differ. Abinash Digar of Sankaridanga and Rudra Pradhan of the same village said that Yugini was ever-changing in shape. During summer noons, she strolls about in lonely fields. If any person happens to meet her, he is sure to die. She has no head, but her eyes are fixed on her breast. Bhaja Paramanik of Kukai described her as a middle-aged woman having long hair and long breasts running down to the waist like an overloaded bag. She puts on a small *Sāri* with a black border. Blood of her victims may be noticed trickling down from her mouth. She wears no ornaments. Occasionally she has a sword in her hand. According to Maheswar Kotal of Ma-Mansa, Yugini is under the control of goddess Sitalā. When Sitalā becomes displeased, she allows her to ravage a village. Yugini is ever thirsty for human blood. She has no permanent habitation. According to Rajani Kotal and Paban Bhakta of Dihipur and Karangabari respectively, she lives in cremation or burial grounds. She is very fond of eating up children.

Elaborate worship with sacrifices is required to pacify her anger. Each Sitalā worship is followed by the worship of Yugini. On that last day, when the sacred earthen vessel representing Sitalā is immersed into water, Yugini is also worshipped. She is worshipped on the road far away from the village or at the village boundary. The direction or the particular spot where offerings are made to Yugini, is ascertained by a sort of divination performed by the Shamans when they are requested to do so. According to some, forecast of a wrong spot is sure to cause deadly disease or terrible calamities. A small earthen vessel is filled with water at the shrine of Sitalā ; a small bundle of *durbā* grass is tied with a string round its rim and later on sweets, fruits and some rice with flowers and other sacred articles are offered in front of the vessel. And finally, a black fowl is sacrificed in her name. In Kukai, in the month of May 1954, they sacrificed one black fowl. Just after the worship all the villagers assembled together with their village band playing music and returned home never looking back towards the place of worship, as that was unlucky.

In Simuldanga, Khejurkuthi, the assistant of the priest sacrificed a fowl and offered its head to Yugini. The sacrificial meat was taken by the assistant priest.

Minor Ghosts and Other Evil Spirits

Kundrās, Chirguni, Pretāsini, Kālpurus, Bāghoā, Gomuā, etc. are also believed to be vicious spirits. They are the souls of men who died accidentally and unnatural death like suicides or from the attacks of snakes or wild animals, The souls of women who died in course of child-birth or those who were killed by evil spirits, also enter their number. These spirits do not have a fixed shape and generally reside in some unclean spot like a cremation or burial ground or where the carcases of cattle are disposed of. They may also reside in large ancient trees or in desolate haunts. Gora Mallik of Benadubi held that these spirits are very harmful to human beings and spirit doctors well-trained in the art of controlling them can counteract their evil influence.

Kundrā

Kundrā ghosts are the spirits of an extremely mischievous nature. Some of the tales given below deal with the existence of ghosts of different types and are related in the homes of every Lodha. In every village when men gather together for rest in the evening, these stories go round from mouth to mouth and thus are passed on from one generation to another amongst the Lodhas.

According to some of the Lodha informants there are four kinds of Kundrā ghosts or spirits such as: —

(i) *Kālipāt Kundrā,*
(ii) *Desāi Chandi Kundrā,*
(iii) *Dhana Kundrā,*
(iv) *Sonāmukhi Kundrā.*

In Kadamdiha many tales about their activities are current. There are certain exorcists, who, either in order to fulfil their own selfish ends, or to harass some one out of jealously or enmity, or to bring one under their control, are supposed to retain certain Kundrā ghosts of different types in their own dwellings.

Kālipāt Kundrā

In Kadamdiha, there is a ghost named *Kālipāt Kundrā* subscrivent to an exorcist named Dhuma Bhakta. If the thatch of a mud hut makes a cracking sound at dead of night, that indicates the visitation of the spirit. Jumping from a near-by tree down on a thatch it walks on foot over it and makes a fearful crackling sound. It was once sighted by one of the informants who described it as a gigantic figure of jet black colour measuring about 10 or 12 cubits and having a pair of axe-like moustaches. This spirit is generally sent to terrorise the owner and inmates of a house. No child is born in the house in which this spirit is harboured. Dhuma Bhakta, for instance, had no male child. If this spirit be set upon a person it would destroy him at once. It is generally very fond of calves and babies. Black goats, pigs and such other animals are sacrificed for its satisfaction.

Desāi Chandi Kundrā

The ghost named *Desāi Chandi Kundrā* or *Rāngāhāṛi Kundrā* looks like a child of jet black colour as described by some of the informants. It is very fond of eating up a man's heart. To gratify it red chickens are sacrificed. Some people are said to have offered a few drops of their blood. This custom is known as *Jānbali* or sacrificing oneself.

Dhana Kundrā

The spirit doctors who maintain this ghost for his service and employ it to steal paddy or riches (*dhana* literally means wealth) belonging to others. This ghost has been harboured by one Sukha Bhakta. Occasionally, a red hen is sacrificed to it.

Sonāmukhi Kundrā and *Jhatiā Kundrā*

These ghosts cause mischief. On the last day of the months of Pous or Māgh a black he-goat is sacrificed on a earthen platform to appease this ghost.

Chirguni

Souls of women dying in course of child-birth are believed to be reborn in company with evil spirits. They are always hankering after a mate for the enjoyment of life. According to Karma Bhakta of Kadamdiha women dying within a few days after delivery become *Chirguni* ghosts. Generally, these spirits live near the graveyard or in woods near a spring or other reservoirs of water. It is believed that if a Chirguni spirit happens to see any person, irrespective of sex, near the burial ground or the roadside where it resides, it pursues him or her closely. Consequently the person shows symptoms of spirit possession.

Generally these spirits are supposed to posses happy young women through envy when the latter suffer from unnatural or premature death. The Chirguni ghosts also try to possess young men and when they kiss or embrace the latter, they fall down senseless.

Some medicinemen or spirit doctors try to control these spirits by their magical powers and incantations which they acquire from the *Veers* or heroes by invoking their aid. These spirits tamed by a powerful spirit doctor are generally utilised for many purposes such as finding out a spirit or knowing the nature of another spirit. These Chirguni spirits are supposed to reside in a wooden seat. The spirit doctors make a contract with these spirits and exact their services when necessary. Offerings are made to them on each new-moon day of puffed rice or fowl or goat's meat in some near-by wood.

Pretāsani

These are the spirits of the little children. A woman dying in course of childbirth becomes a Chirguni ghost while the baby in the womb becomes a Pretāsani. A baby dying after a few days of delivery also becomes a Pretāsani. These spirits have ever-changing shapes; sometimes they look like a cat or a little dog, sometimes like a sleek cow. At night they weep out of hunger. Sometimes they come and touch the feet of passers-by. It is believed that if any pregnant woman unfortunately comes in contact with these spirits who are hankering after rebirth, she contracts diseases of the womb resulting in the destruction of the baby inside. Magical steps are necessary to ward off these spirits.

Kālpurush

Kālpurush is believed to be a male spirit. This word is probably derived from the Bengali words *Kāl* meaning dark, and *Purush* meaning a male person. According to Gora Mallik of Benadubi this spirit is as tall as a palm-tree (about 50 ft.) and pitch-dark in colour. It has two hands and two legs with a large head containing two shining eyes. It wears a red loin-cloth. This spirit generally lives in fallow lands or upon trees and walks on the road at dead of night. But it never comes to any village. If anybody happens to pass by this dangerous spirit, serious illness is sure to befall him making him an invalid. In such a case a witch doctor is generally sent for. He ascertains by oil divination what is to be sacrificed to satisfy the Kālpurush. In 1952, Rudra Pradhan of Sankaridanga suffered from a serious illness suppossed to be due to Kālpurush, whom Rudra happened to see at dead of night when he went out to attend nature's call. Pachu Paramanik, a reputed doctor of magical powers, was sent for, when he diagonosed it to be the act of a Kālpurush and prescribed the following articles to exorcise the spirit:—

(i) One black fowl,
(ii) Vermilion,
(iii) A little earth from the hearth,
(iv) A bit of charcoal,
(v) A few sweetmeats,
(vi) Some flowers.

When these articles were collected the doctor alone went to the spot of Kālpurush on a Sunday evening, offered these to him on a banana leaf and sacrificed a fowl there. After this Rudra completely recovered.

Bāghot Bhut

These are the spirits of persons killed by tigers. These spirits generally prowl about at night and call certain persons by name, who, if they respond to this call, will inevitably suffer from illness or even may be killed by wild animals. Occasionally, these spirits roam about in woods and seize cattle. In Jhargram Sub-division, cows are said to have lost their tails in trying to free themselves from the clutches of *Bāghot Bhuts* who generally catch the tails of cows to kill them. The ghosts may be driven out from the locality by a Gunni or magician if he recites certain formulæ.

Gomuā Bhut

This is said to be the spirit of a cow dying at the time of delivery. This ghost may change its shape to that of a pumpkin, a cat, a calf or a goat as was stated by eye-witnesses. This spirit threatens passers-by at night by changing shapes very frequently. When a person normally afraid of this spirit, meets it, he suffers from an attack of fever attended with delirium. A spirit doctor is called in and a piece of burning turmeric is touched on the forehead of the sick and magical formulæ are uttered at the same time. They reside at places reserved for disposal of dead cattle.

Dāini Bhuts

These are the spirits of dead *Dāinis* or witches. They have ever-changing shapes, though these spirits usually take the form of a dog or a cat. The spirit, in the shape of a cat, enters a house. If, by chance, it casts a look upon a child, the poor victim begins to wither from that day. At last it dies. They can however be detected by the spirit doctors by oil divination. The usual treatment by means of magical blows and amulets is given to the child in such a case.

Jankā or Jakshiā

This is a water spirit. It has a round body about 5 or 6 cubits in girth. It moves slowly. This spirit has no feet nor arms. Only two wide open eyes may be seen in the middle of its body. It is believed that the spirit can do harm by fixing its gaze on a person. At dead of night it generally comes out of water and sits near its bank or under a tree. It is reported that these spirits originate from the souls of miserly well-to-do persons who die an untimely death without any issue. After their death, their spirits guard the riches accumulated in large round vessels.

Some of the villagers of Dihipur told the writer that they observed *Jankās* in the river Kaliaghai and even at Himsagar, a large tank near it. These Jankā spirits generally fly from the river Kaliaghai to Himsagar. Occasional sounds of silver coins rattling within a jar may be heard at dead of night. One Sarat Nayek of Dihipur told the writer that he saw the silver coins of a Jankā spirit playing on the surface of the water just as the fishes usually do.

Jankā spirits are also found at Kukai where there are several tanks remaining unexcavated for a pretty long time. The same kind of story was related here.

Kāth

Besides the Jankā spirit, there is another kind of water-spirit named 'Kāth' or 'Mai'. It is believed that this spirit is very dangerous and comes out of its abode in the river during flood or heavy rain. At that time these Kāths swim like fishes and constantly strike their heads against the banks of the river. Their heads are smeared with vermilion. These Kāths attain a length of 2 to 10 cubits. They catch the legs or head of a solitary man when he bathes or moves in the water in search of fish. They engage this victim as a servant to guard their wealth and other properties. They are occasionally seen near the banks of the river Subarnarekha.

Concept of Soul

According to some of the Lodha informants every living human body possesses a kind of airy substance known as *Ātmā* or soul. Death is caused when this *Ātmā* leaves the body. At the time of death this *Ātmā* exits from its mortal frame through nose, mouth, eyes or anus. But women informants like Binata of Radhanagar, Lakshi of Jaralata and a few others seemed to have no idea about the soul or the substance which causes one to live or die.

One Nirada of Kukai said that after death the soul of the dead person stays near trees or jungles or houses. When the period of mourning is over, this spirit goes away to live in distant places and generally comes back again to its former habitation to see relatives when they are ill.

There is a considerable difference of opinion about the fate of the soul after death, Lakshindra Mallik of Kukai said that the fate of the soul is mainly decided according to the nature of deeds the person had done during his life-time. Evil activities like theft, commitment of crimes, falsehood and disbelief in the gods compel the soul to go to hell where it is believed to undergo due punishment. After the expiry of the penal period it is again relieved and goes to *Sarga* or heaven where all pious souls finally reside. When time comes, this soul is reborn in a higher caste. Rajani Kotal of Dihipur said that regular offering of prayers, vegetarian diet, fasting during the full-moon day or new-moon day leads to 'purification' when one gains a seat after death near the souls of pious men in heaven. Maheswar Kotal of Ma-Mansa has the same belief.

However, the conception about heaven among the Lodhas is vague. Only a few could give a kind of description of heaven, evidently derived from their Hindu neighbours. Some pointed at the sky, and said—heaven was high up and it was a place where none suffered from anxiety or distress.

Some Lodhas are regarded as being able to control supernatural activities by their occult powers. They are classified according to the practices they follow and have to undergo a period of regular training. The training is hard and entails a number of restrictions. After the completion of the period, a person is entitled to practise independently without the help of his preceptor or *Guru.* Besides the regular trainees, who are locally called *Chelās,* there are several persons who are suspected to have magical (evil) powers associated with them since birth and are generally called *Dāins* or witches. The Lodhas have their witch doctors or sooth-sayers to find out the evil spirits or sorcerers or witches, and have sacred formulæ or spells to counteract or exorcise them. They also prescribe amulets or charms which are thought to exercise some particular powers and the magicians invoke them with their long-winded incantations to win their favour. Sacrifices are often offered by the witch doctor when he has made a vow.

Classification of Magicians or Medicinemen

Magicians are grouped in the Lodha society according to their nature of practices. They are mainly grouped as follows:—

(i) The *Gunni* or *Ojhā* or Sorcerer sometimes acts as spirit doctor or spirit-finder.

(ii) The *Dāin* or witch generally practises anti-social activities.

(iii) The *Byakṛā* or Shaman who practises divination.

(iv) The snake charmer.

The Gunni or Ojhā

The main function of Gunni or Ojhā is to cure diseases with the help of medicinal herbs. When required they apply magical spells to drive away evil spirits supposed to cause harm. They give amulets or charms to cure a person of disease or to save him from the attack of the evil spirits. Occasionally, they play the part of a sorcerer. They utter long-winded incantations to drive away spirits or ghosts, which according to the above classification are the functions of a sooth-sayer. When a pregnant woman suffers from labour pain, they are invoked to provide her relief by occult methods. In such cases, the first thing they do is to direct the person affected to promise one fowl or a goat for Barām or Yugini.

In case of snake-bite the Ojhās are sent for and requested to counteract the poison by means of their sacred formulæ.

In Kukai Hari Bhakta knows the art of sorcery. Jiten, though not yet experienced enough in the art of sorcery, has learnt a few magical operations. Pachu Paramanik of Sankaridanga is reputed for his magical powers performed through *Kānfuk*-blowing wind with charms into the ears of the diseased person. He also prescribes a sacrifice to the spirit or deity concerned after the cure.

Jiten of Kukai, not only practises this art amongst the Lodhas but is generally called in by people of the surrounding villages. He is known as a specialist in the diseases of women and children resulting from natural or spiritual troubles for which he is paid very meagrely by poor Lodhas, but often handsomely by well-to-do persons of the neighbouring villages.

Dharani Digar of Parulda is a Gunni. He knows the art of driving away the spirits. The spirits generally attack the weak persons who gradually develop signs of spirit possession. Dharani practises the same methods to tackle these ghosts as are adopted by other spirit doctors. He is also a professional man.

In Daharpur, Umesh Kotal knows this art and is reputed to practise it not only within the limited circle of this own community but also among other castes. He exorcises evil spirits by means of incantation. He can also counteract snake poisoning by uttering long incantations. But he does not catch snakes like a snake-charmer. Umesh can detect the causes of any illness by divination. He can counteract the influence of witches by means of spells and sacrifices to Yugini.

Pachu Lodha of Darkhuli is well known for his magical powers. Once in the month of April, 1953, Nadia Lodha of Jaralata suffered from a serious wound while out on snake-catching. This wound was very painful, and he suspected that it was caused by a witch who lived in the village of of Dubrajpur near by. Nadia's wife went to Pachu who came to Nadia's house.

At first he tried divination with oil. Three drops of mustard oil were placed on three leaves of *sāl* and each leaf was folded and closed by means of a thorn. Then he invoked the spirits of *Veers* or heroes to win their favour. He sat facing east. Affer uttering some long incantations, he opened the leaves and said that his suspicion was correct. Then he put a handful of dust, magically potent, on the roof of Nadia's hut and went away. He also gave magical blows on the wound. There were no restrictions about the diet of the patient.

Next day Nadia did not feel better and again his wife went to Pachu. He came and asked her to bring the following articles:—

(i) One bow with bamboo string,
(ii) One *sāl* twig used for cleansing teeth,
(iii) An incense pot with incense therein,
(iv) a few leaves of *tulasi*.

At first Pachu washed his feet and then brushed his teeth with the *sāl* twig. He sat facing the east. The incense was kept burning in front of him. He invoked the deities and *Veers* or heroes to gain their favour for the cure of the disease, Then he caught the string of the bow and placed the *sāl* twig used by him on the inner side of the bamboo stave. This was held above the incense from which smoke was coming out in ringlets. By his right hand he took the leaves of *tulasi* and placed them on the stave in the name of the heroes and gave magical blows on it. This took nearly an hour and he told that a witch had shot arrows at Nadia. These arrows consisted of some particles of stones. Pachu suggested that these arrows must be found out from the wound which was swollen then. Then Pachu caught the affected leg of Nadia firmly by his hands and began to bite the wound with his teeth. Nadia cried out of extreme pain while Pachu was cutting open with his teeth the swollen portion. Pus including blood came out of the wound. After a while Nadia got full relief. Pachu showed two hair follicles and four pieces of small stones and explained to him that these were the 'arrows' shot by the witch to give him trouble. Pachu got twenty-five naye paise as remuneration. Nadia recovered after this treatment. No external medicine was applied to the wound to effect the recovery.

In Kadamdiha, Sital Ahari knows this art of magic. He cured many diseases by magical blows, Local people think that Sital Ahari can secure the help of Chirguni ghosts in his magical operations.

Umesh Kotal of Daharpur was able to cure the spleen of a boy named Sishudevnath, aged 14, of the Nath caste. The writer fortunately was present there at that time. Sishudevnath had been suffering from malarial fever for a pretty long time and as a result his spleen became enlarged. His father called in Umesh for treatment. Umesh asked Sishu's father to collect the following articles for his treatment:—

(i) Three betel leaves.
(ii) One new piece of napkin.
(iii) Some quantity of mustard oil kept in a pot.
(iv) One new earthen dish.
(v) A few pieces of wood for making a fire.

One Sunday, Umesh came early in the morning to Sishu's place. The patient was on fast and was made to lie down with his head to the east. Umesh sat by his side and recited several incantations. An earthen lamp was kept lit with mustard oil. Incense was burnt in an earthen cup. Then the new napkin was folded seven times and dipped in water to make it wet. Three betel leaves were smeared with mustard oil and these were placed between the folds of the napkin. Then the napkin was placed just above the spleen. Lastly the burning incense pot was kept on the napkin which was placed a little above the spleen of the boy. After a while Sishudevnath began to feel the burning sensation and cried repeatedly in agony. Several persons caught hold of his hands and feet. Umesh began to utter incantations all the while. When Umesh thought that he had given the advantage of sufficient treatment to the boy, he removed the pots and napkin and bade Sishudevnath go away. Thus the magical treatment was administered and Umesh was given twenty-five naye paise as remuneration. He also took the napkin and one seer of rice. After a few days a wound was formed on the abdomen of the boy as a result of the burns sustained by him in course of the treatment. This mark would remain throughout his life though his disease might be cured in a few days.

One Champa of the village Kukai knows the art of magic and is able to cure diseases not only in her own community but amongst people living in the surrounding areas. She prepares some tablets of medicinal roots. She makes her patients promise to offer as sacrifice a goat or a fowl to the goddess Sitalā within a year of the cure. She takes a piece of cloth and sometimes a few rupees as remuneration. She claims to know the process of causing abortion by means of herbs and medicinal plants.

The juice of the *Bhelwā* (Semicarpus anacardium) fruit is used to cure headaches. Its secretion on the forehead of a patient will give him immediate relief and he will be all right from the next moment. Its only adverse effect is that there remains several dot marks after the application of the *Bhelwā* juice. However the Gunnis apply this as a cure as stated by Jiten of Kukai.

Thus the Ojhās or Gunnis of the Lodha society are skilled in the process of divination and invocation of the deities as well as versed in several spells of incantations to get the favour of the *Veers* or heroes. Occasionally they give amulets to patients to avert the influence of evil spirits. Sometimes they also employ other spirits like Chirguni, etc. to catch or drive away other spirits creating trouble.

Training of the Gunnī

The Gunnis or Ojhās also play the role of witch-finders and witch doctors, spirit-finders and exorcists, practising generally white magic for helping their patients with or without remuneration. They have of course to undergo a long course of training under a preceptor.

In Kadamdiha, Dharma received his training from a preceptor who, on each new-moon day, imparted such training to his disciples. Dharma first expressed his desire to the teacher to have this training and the latter readily gave his consent. A general description of the mode of training is given below. This was obtained from Dharma himself.

Mode of Training

On the particular day of training the disciple remains on fast and arrives after sunset at his preceptor's place. There the preceptor sits on a burnt wood left after cremation, and with his face towards the east. An earthen lamp fed with *Kachṛā* (fruit of Bassia latifolia) oil is lighted. Then the adept invokes some deities to gain their favour for transmission of power. The disciple also follows the teacher's instruction and invokes the deities in the same way. Then he utters several sacred formulæ or spells addressing the *Veers* or heroes of the past. At that time the disciple shows signs of spirit-possession. After a few months, the preceptor would take his disciple to the graveyard to please the other spirits or to enslave them by *mantras*. When the disciple is thought to have mastered the art, the teacher would initiate him to the final incantation, From that day the disciple would be authorised to start independent practice. He would give the preceptor a feast and a new piece of cloth. Several sacrifices of goats would also be offered to the deities. All this is done in secret and the disciple is strictly advised not to divulge the proceedings to anybody.

The Gunnis are also found to control the Chirguni ghost. The controlling of Chirguni ghost is a difficult process. A statement given by Makra Bhakta is given here.

On the death of a pregnant woman or a woman after child-birth, she is generally buried under the ground. The witch doctor is always on the look-out for such a dead body. Alone he goes to the burial ground at dead of night with the following articles: —

(i) One knife.
(ii) A few *sāl* leaves.
(iii) One bone (humerus) of a child magically powerful.
(iv) One *Kājalpātā* or receptor of collyrium.
(v) Some quantity of vermilion.
(vi) A wooden seat.

He then invokes the *Veers* and *Gurus* by means of his long incantations. He would welcome and ask the spirit of the dead woman to come out of the grave. Being asked by the witch doctor she (the spirit) would come out of the grave. At that time she would generally be hungry and ask for some food in a nasal tone. The witch doctor would serve her with the following articles of food: —

A quantity of dried soil from the pit of the earthworm and a few leaves of *Āmloki* (Phyllanthus emblica) tree. The leaves represent the flattened rice whereas the mud of the earthworm pit represents sweet or coarse sugar. Thus the spirit was fed with flattened rice and coarse sugar. After this there would be an agreement made between the Chirguni spirit and the witch doctor. The witch doctor would generally say : —

'I have wife and children at home; you should not do any harm to them if I keep you in the same place where I stay.'

The spirit would reply—"I should not do any harm to anybody. I would obey all the directions given by you to me. If I violate the rules, you may punish me according to your desire," Thus the spirit of the dead agrees to the proposal of the witch doctor. The witch doctor then would offer a wooden seat to the spirit to squat upon. He would again feed the spirit in the same manner. After this he would mark three vermilin dots on the wooden seat and place one Kajalpata for keeping black ointment for the eye on it.

The witch doctor would then come back to his own house with the Chirguni spirit and keep the wooden seat with the Kajalpata in one corner of his room. The entrance to the room is strictly prohibited for other members of the family. Thus the spirit was tended by the witch doctor and acted according to his sweet desires. Occasionally, the spirit was supplied with fresh food (leaves, etc.) or black fowl on a new-moon day. The witch doctor would mark a black dot on his forehead, before commencing any magical operation from the Kajalpata he had preserved. Thus with the help of the spirit the witch doctor became successful in all his work.

Witches

The faith in witches of *Dāins* and their evil influence is widely prevalent ln Lodha society. They can be both male and female. When discovered, they are seriously assulted and excommunicated from society. By chance the writer came in contact with such a witch who lived at Jamboni, a village near Kesiari. When her neighbours came to know that she was practising witchcraft, she ran away to a village at a distance of twelve miles.

One Radha Mallik of Sankaridanga is supposed to know witchcraft. He is believed to have killed by means of occult power some boys who died after vomitting blood. Radha Mallik had to shift to Narayangarh, as his neighbours became hostile.

The account of popular beliefs regarding the witches has been collected from different villages in the Lodha area. Lakshindar Mallik of Kukāi said that the witches have evil mouths and evil eyes. They are born with an evil potency in their eyes, i.e. whenever the witches cast their look on a living thing, harm is sure to follow. If the witch stares at a fine calf, the calf will surely die shortly. If the witch gazes at a particular vegetable field or fruit, these will wither or dry up soon.

Rajani Kotal or Dihipur said that the witch can eat little children at her will. If she were allowed to see a child of a particular family, after a few days the child would be affected with a serious disease. The belief is that the child would die as a result and after its burial the dead body would be disintered and eaten up by the witch. In Birkar one Kandru Kotal was suspected of practising witchcraft, and according to some of the villagers, he had eaten up a few children of that village in the year 1954. The particulars of these chidren are given below: —

(i) Surendra Kotal's two-year old son.
(ii) Makra's one-year old daughter.
(iii) Tahsil Ahari's grand-daughter aged about 6 months.

These children died all of a sudden and the villagers began to suspect Kandru Kotal. One day he was seriously beaten by Yudhisthir Kotal of the same village and threatened with death. Later he was taken to a Brahmin astrologer near Dantan to verity whether he was actually practising witchcraft.

Fortunately, the Brahmin examined him and said that he was not guilty. He was then allowed to go free. The writer was accidentally present on the occasion, and also helped in dispelling the misunderstanding.

Makra of Kadamdiha is also of opinion that if a witch looks at a particular boy or a domestic animal, it would wither or pine away gradually.

As a safeguard against witchery, the placenta of a child is buried inside the room to avoid evil eye. Paddy fields or a good crop of vegetables are protected with the skull of a cow or a worn-out shoe hanging from a pole. Sometimes a scare-crow is placed in the middle of the field where used earthen vessels are placed bottom upwards with several white dots put with lime on them. This is supposed to counteract the evil eye and evil mouth of a witch.

Throughout Lodha society, witches are hated and feared as well. According to Jiten of Kukāi they have to undergo a training in every new-moon night. There they acquired thorough knowledge in the secret art. Witches, according to Jiten, are confined to the female sex only, though exceptions were found in Sankaridanga and Birkar where men are known to practise black art. On the scheduled day, at dead of night, the witch is supposed to strip off her clothes and raise her legs upwards and walk on her hands. In this posture she walks a long way and eats human excreta here and there. Should any one happen to meet her at that time, he may fall seriously ill. If anybody removes her clothes in secret when she is away and puts it into a fire, the witch is sure to die.

Occasionally, some amulets or charms are worn to avert the evil infiuence of a witch.

Shaman or Spirit-Possessed Man

In every Lodha village there are several persons who are called Byakras or Shamans. Only men can become Byakras. During the Changal dance, these persons gradually lose consciousness and shake their heads violently from side to side or forward and backward when they are supposed to be possessed by spirits. Sometimes they run from the spot where they are such possessed to the main road of the village uttering a queer shriek or cry. Then the dancing party begin their song with a new vigour in order to appease the spirit. Arrangements are generally made for burning incense, and the possessed man shakes his head in order to avoid the smell. In this state of possession, he makes some statement or gives descriptions of some impending incidents that might affect the welfare of the village or that of the community. Some people ask him questions and he gives answers to them in a melodious tone. He thus becomes an oracle.

After a while the person runs from one place to another and the village bailiff or a strong person is called in to help bring this person back to consciousness. A whip made of *sābāi* (Ichæmum augustifolium) grass is generally brought from the house of the priest or from the shrine of the goddess Sitalā. The bailiff or a strong man strikes him with the whip for some time. After several strokes the person falls flat on the ground and water is supplied to him if asked for to quench his thirst. After a while he regains consciousness.

Such persons are met with in almost every Lodha village, and the writer witnessed several such cases in different localities. But they were all of the same character.

During the worship of Sitalā in April 1954 at Kukai, Govinda Nayek showed signs of being possessed by spirit. He was in the dancing party. The party had only finished the invocation song. As soon as they began to sing a Baramasi song, Govinda, all of a sudden, shouted out loudly and ran from the dancing ground to the roadside; but in a minute or so came back and gradually lost consciousness. He shook his head with increasing vehemence. The village priest was present there. He held a cup with incense burning. The priest sprinkled some more incense on the fire.

Then Govinda, in a peculiar voice, began to utter his 'oracle'. About a month ago, there was an epidemic of measles in Kukāi and almost all the boys were affected. Govinda related this incident and said that the deity Sitala was now pleased. He also advised them to celebrate the worship of Jugini on the road at the southmost corner of the village, as the deity wanted to go southwards. Govinda shook his head and then went off from the shrine. Jiten, the assistant priest of the village took the whip of sabai grass from the shrine and gave seven strokes on his arm. After that Govinda fell down on the ground and gradually regained consciousness.

The writer also witnessed cases of spirit-possession in villages like Sankaridanga, Benadubi, Dihipur and Ma-Mansa.

Shamans are generally held in high esteem. But in Kukai, Gopal Nayek was publicly rediculed, as he could not give out a single truth even when he was in an oracular trance.

The Shaman never gets any remuneration. Some of the Lodha informants told the writer that some people wanted to know their future from such Shamans. An experienced Shaman is in a position to detect the causes of calamities in a village and suggest its remedy.

Training of the Shamans

The Shamans are thought to be persons specially favoured by some deities like Sitalā, Chandi, etc. and the other heroes. Yet they have to undergo a long course of systematic training from a preceptor. After a few months, when the preceptor becomes satisfied, he utters for him the last incantation or spell "for opening of the mouth", so that the new disciple may henceforth practise on his own initiative.

In Kukai, Hari Bhakta is a witch doctor as well as a Shaman and is treated as a preceptor. Govinda, Mahendra, Jajneswar, Gopal and others requested him to take them as his apprentices. Hari gave his consent and the disciples were directed to come every Tuesday and Saturday evenings. On a particular day, they observed a fast. After sunset, they came to the house of Hari who asked them to take a bath. They did accordingly and sat on the courtyard facing the west. Hari drew a circle round them and gave each of them a broom-stick. They held the broom-sticks vertically on the ground, while they squatted in a circle. Then Hari Bhakta drew nine dots on the ground with vermilion in the following manner:—

0 0 0
0 0 0 | Vermilion dots.
0 0 0

Then he invoked the goddess Sitalā. Hari kept some unhusked rice on a new winnowing fan, and durba grass on his right side. An earthen lamp was lit and it was fed by mustard oil. A cup with incense burning was also placed there. Hari then prayed to other gods like Baram, Chandi, etc. Then he invoked some heroes of the past for their blessing.

This sort of training in the usual course was continued for a few months. After that the disciples learned the art and gained the favour of the heroes or the deities. As a result, they showed signs of spirit-possession. During spirit-possession, they threw away their broom-sticks, and gradually shook their heads and shouted loudly. At that time Hari Bhakta, the preceptor, had to recite spells or incantations in the manner of formulae before the apprentices and they had to recite these again. In this way the disciples became familier with the different kinds of formulae or incantations.

When Hari was satisfied as to the fitness of the disciples, he gave them permission to practise independently.

On the last day of the training some of the disciples would present a new piece of cloth and an amount of cash money as an honour to the preceptor.

The preceptor of a spirit-possessed man summons a number of Veers or heroes, one by one, as many times as possible, and each time a Veer or a spirit when satisfied by incantations or charms, passess through a man, who when possessed by the spirit, indicates the symptoms by queer gesticulations or spasmodic signs of the spirit invoked. These spirits have been classified and named under the following heads according to their respective powers and qualities, which are manifested by the symptoms displayed by the Shamans: —

(1) *Āhār Veer* or food-hunter.
(2) *Pavan Veer*, the Wind God.
(3) *Hanumān Veer*, the son of Wind God, (the monkey god).
(4) *Agni Veer*, the Fire Eater.
(5) *Vara Veer*, the Superior Hero.
(6) *Chotta Veer*, the Inferior Hero.
(7) *Chalanta Veer*, the Wandering Hero.
(8) *Dāini Veer*, the Witch Heroine,
(9) *Manasā Veer*, the Snake Heroine.
(10) *Khechungā Veer*, the Convulsion Hero.

As stated by the informants and as witnessed by the writer himself, some of the feats, which one Rakshit Kotal of Kukai performed after being possessed by *Agni Veer* after regular prayers and songs interspersed with burning of incense, were astounding enough. The spirit was summoned by a preceptor and revealed itself through Rakshit who was then possessed. He displayed an uncommon power attended with violent spasmodic convulsions and reddened eyes, and at last, to the utter wonder of all present, began to eat up burning pieces of charcoal.

In another instance, one Chamtu Lodha of Kadamdiha was possessed by Manasā Veer or Snake Heroine in the same manner. He displayed his feats by raising his hands erect like a snake and bending his fingers just like its hood and producing intermittent hissing sounds through his mouth.

Kanta Mallik, Banka Mallik and some other persons of this village are often possessed by Hanuman Veer. They display the feats of Hanuman, the black-faced monkey chief, by climbing thatched roofs at a single jump, eating raw pumpkins and such other fruits, chewing them with a grating sound.

The Snake Charmer

One of the subsidiary occupations of the Lodhas is snake-charming. They are a landless people who generally collect firewood from the jungle and catch snakes. They sell the skin of snakes to merchants. Several Lodhas told the writer that they went far away from their homes in search of snakes. There a gang worked under a trader whose chief occupation was to supply snake-skins to contractors. However, while thus employed, they catch occasionally many venomous snakes like the cobra, etc.

Nobody was found by the writer to have adopted the profession of snake-charming as the Savaras[13] generally do. While catching snakes they use several wild roots which are thought to be effective antidotes of snake poison. The catching of cobras is a dangerous operation. One man pulls the tail of the snake suddenly at which it becomes very furious. Then he firmly catches the tail and hangs it down towards the ground. After a few minutes he catches its throat by his right hand and breaks the poisonous fangs by means of a knife.

They also utter some incantations to appease the goddess Manasā and gain her favour thereby. Varieties of such incantations are uttered at the time of catching snakes. Some Lodhas are called in by outsiders to cure cases of snake-bites.

Training of the Snake Charmer

In Kadamdiha Sital Ahari started teaching the art of snake-charming to a number of apprentices on an auspicious day of new moon on the 13th Jaistha (May and June) 1358 B.S. (1958 A.D.). They were four young men named Chamtu,

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[13] Bhowmick P. K: "Savaras of Midnapur" (*Vanyajati*, Delhi Vol. 3 No. 2, 1955).

Kanta, Banka and Bhim. They had already learnt the art of dealing with spirit-possession from him. For the present purpose an earthen platform was built on his own courtyard, three feet in length and one foot in breadth, running from north to south and articles required for worshipping Manasā, the goddess of snakes, were also purchased. These were as follows:—

(i) *Pahilā-hāter Sinduṛ'*, i.e. one phial of vermilion purchased from a shop immediately on opening before the commencement of any other sale.
(ii) Varieties of sweet meat,
(iii) Some incense,
(iv) An earthen lamp and an earthen lamp-stand,
(v) Some sun-dried rice, i.e. unboiled rice,
(vi) A nestling pigeon,
(vii) A black he-goat.

On the north and south end of the platform a branch of the Manasā (Euphorbia nerifolia) tree and one of *tulasi* were planted respectively, Now Sital seated himself on a wooden seat placed in front of the platform facing the Manasā plant, the symbol of the goddess, and the disciples took their seats facing their preceptor. Sital made three circles on a straight line keeping a little space between each painted with vermilion on the platform. These red circles meant the symbols of three deities namely, Basumata, Dharam Devata and Sitalā. Then he himself sacrificed a goat and kept its head on the platform. Thereafter a pigeon was also sacrificed. The ceremonies terminated at 9 a.m. on that day. He then distributed the meat amongst his followers. Since that evening, the preceptor went on uttering incantations or charms in rhythmic chants for about two to three hours every evening, and the disciples were directed to commit them to memory. Thus he gave lessons to his disciples on charms and methods of snake-charming, snake-catching, exorcism, relieving snake poison and miscellaneous charms on the diseases of children and women, such as want of milk in women and cows, etc. Once on every Saturday evening, Manasā was wershipped with vermilion.

Thus the course of training was completed on the last day of Āsvin (October-November). The disciples were also given practical training in snake-catching, extraction of the poisonous fangs, etc. during this period. Manasā worship was again performed on that day in the manner described above. The preceptor was awarded a piece of cloth and a wrapper by the trainees on completion of their training, Generally, it requires two to three years to complete the course of training. *Mukḥ Sādhan Mantra* or chant for 'opening the mouth' was given to the disciples who could finish their course first. The ablest student was entertained with milk and plantain by the preceptor with his own hands. The implication of observing this ceremony is that the disciple would be taught thoroughly upto the limits of knowledge of his preceptor, and he would be called *Utrain*, i. e. passed and certified.

Deheri

The *Deheris* are important religious and village officials in Lodha society. Details of their status and activities have already been discussed. The Deheri of Joychandi of Pitalkanthi receives special consideration not only in his own community but also in the neighbouring ones. Hatiram, the present Deheri of Joychandi, sometimes is asked to propitiate the goddess Sitalā on behalf of the Dom and Santal communities of the locality. There is practically no systematic training for a Deheri as in the case of the medicineman, snake-charmer or Shaman. But Hatiram has purchased a copy of the 'Purohit Darpan', a printed guide for priests published in Calcutta.

Magico-religious activities are directed towards the cure of diseases and removing difficulties. A few diseases are attributed to particular spirits or deities, so steps are taken by the specialists to appease their anger. Again owing to contact with the neighbouring caste groups or some other reasons many of the above practices are being abandoned by them, though they still believe in their efficacy. Though precautions are taken against epidemic diseases, yet belief in the magical powers or in charms is firmly rooted in their minds. Some of the villages are very close to the Police Station or railway station where there are trained physicians. The Lodhas now-a-days take frequent help from these physicians and at the same time they use of local herbs or country-made remedies followed by acts of offerings, sacrifices and propitiation.

A detailed account of the incidence of disease in a few villages for one year and the modes of treatment is given in Table 24 in order to indicate how religious and magical beliefs or practices stand in relation to other ways of treatment.

TABLE 24

NATURE OF TREATMENT OF DISEASES

Vill.. Daharpur, P.S. Narayangarh (1954-1955)

Serial No.	Name.	Age.	Sex.	Details of the disease.	Methods of treatment.	Period of suffering.
1.	Murali Kotal	32	Male	Pneumonia	Medicinal herbs etc.	20 days
2.	Rebati Kotal	8	Female	Dysentery	do	1 Month
3.	Indra Bhakta	70	Male	Pneumonia (acute)	Doctor called	15 days
4.	Draupadi	17	Female	Labour pain	1 goat to Sitala	do
5.	Satis Bhakta	32	Male	Pneumonia	Doctors consulted	do
6.	Kamala Kotal	18	Female	Acute labour pain	1 goat promised to Sitalā	5 days
7.	Gunadhar Kotal	40	Male	Pneumonia	Doctor consulted	10 days
8.	Badal Bhakta	5	Male	General anasarca	Doctor and medicine	2 months
9.	Ratinath Kotal	32	Male	Venereal disease	Medicinal herbs	1 year
10.	Nani Kotal	17	Female	Chronic headache	Gunni called: sickle heated and touched on forehead during pain	1 month

(*Contd. Table 24*)

Serial No.	Name.	Age.	Sex.	Details of the disease.	Methods of treatment.	Period of suffering.
11.	Gurai Kotal	7	Male	Sudden high fever with congested eye. Supposed case of spirit-possession	1 goat and plantains offered to Baram	2 days
12.	Ashu Kotal	33	Male	Pneumonia	Doctor consulted	15 days
13.	Parbati Kotal	45	Female	Swollen feet with fever	Medicinal herbs	5 days
14.	Netri Nayek	16	Female	Labour pain	Promised to offer sweets and a garland to Sitalā	1 day
15.	Basanti Kotal	18	Female	High fever with delirium, a suspected case of spirit-possession	Byakra consulted. Gunni treated by magical blowing	2 days
16.	Sani Nayek	7	Female	as in No. 15	Byakra consulted. Promised to offer 1 goat to Sitala	2 days
17.	Ganesh Digar	40	Male	Pneumonia	Doctor consulted 1 garland to Sitala, 1 fowl to Baram	10 days

(*Contd. Table 24*)

Serial No.	Name.	Agé.	Sex.	Details of the disease.	Methods of treatment.	Period of suffering.
18.	Gostha Digar	15	Male	Pneumonia	Doctor consulted 1 garland to Sitalā, 1 fowl to Baram	15 days
19.	Brojo Digar	6	Female	High fever with delirium	Byakra consulted 1 garland to Sitalā, 1 fowl to Baram	3 days
20.	Bankim Mallik	33	Male	Pneumonia	Doctor consulted	10 days
21.	Chaitanya	6	Female	do	do	15 days
22.	Prava	2	Female	High fever, supposed case of spirit-possession	Gunni and Byakra consulted	2 days
23.	Sara Bhakta	15	Female	Acute labour pain	1 garland and 1 goat promised to Sitala	2 days
24.	Reba Kotal	40	Female	Pneumonia	Vermilion and fowl promised to Baram	7 days
25.	Lakshi Mallik	16	Female	Pain in the chest	Medicinal herbs from Gunni	7 days
26.	Baidya Mallik	6	Male	Measles	1 garland, sweets, 1 goat promised to Sitala	5 days

(*Contd. Table 24*)

Serial No.	Name.	Age.	Sex.	Details of the disease.	Method of treatment.	Period of suffering.
27.	Sami Kotal	17	Male	Pneumonia	Doctor consulted. 1 piece of cloth and goat promised to Sitalā	15 days
28.	Bipin Bhakta	16	Male	Pain in one side	Doctor consulted	2 days
29.	Behula Bhakta	2	Female	Sudden fever	Doctor consulted. 1 goat and sweets to Sitala	10 days
				VILL. KUKAI, P.S. KESIARI (1953-54)		
1.	Ram Kotal	60	Male	Swelling of right foot	Medicinal herb given by Gunni	9 days
2.	Bibhuti Kotal	1	Male	Fever	1 talisman and magical aid given by Gunni	14 days
3.	Gagan Kotal	40	Male	Fever	1 talisman and magical herbs used. Doctor consulted later, and sweets promised to Sitalā	18 days

(Contd. Table 24)

Serial No.	Name.	Age.	Sex.	Details of the disease	Methods of treatment.	Period of suffering.
4.	Pulin Kotal	2	Male	Sudden high fever with congested eyes	Byakra consulted. 1 fowl promised to Baram	1½ days
5.	Balaram Digar	6	Male	Pneumonia	Medicinal herbs by Gunni. Sweets promised to Mahaprabhu	15 days
6.	Sabani Digar	3	Female	do	Medicinal herbs by Gunni. Sweets promised to Sitala	15 days
7.	Nishi	32	Female	Diarrhoea	Doctor consulted Promised to offer sweets to Sitala	4 days
8.	Brajendra Mallik	32	Male	Asthma	Doctor consulted	Chronic
9.	Pitambar Mallik	42	do	Malaria	Medicinal herbs by Gunni	8 days
10.	Bipin Mallik	55	do	Chronic acidity	Doctor consulted	Chronic
11.	Lakhindra	45	do	Venereal disease	Medicinal herbs	do
12.	Budhi Nayek	6	Female	Fever	No treatment	1 day

(*Contd. Table 24*)

Serial No.	Name	Age.	Sex.	Details of the disease.	Methods of treatment.	Period of suffering.
13.	Ashu Nayek	25	Male	Pneumonia	Doctor consulted. Promised to offer sweets to Sitala	15 days
14.	Santi Nayek	4	Female	do	Medicinal herbs and talisman	10 days
15.	Draupadi Digar	72	Female	Venereal disease	Medicinal herbs applied. Doctor consulted. Promised to offer sweets to Sitala	Chronic
16.	Usha Digar	1	Female	Asthma	Promised to sacrifice a pigeon to Baram	15 days
17.	Ila Digar	3	Female	Stomach trouble with Helminthic infection	Medicinal herbs used Lastly doctor consulted. Promised to offer a garland to Sitala and one fowl to Baram	2 months
18.	Kamini Kotal	32	Female	Venereal disease	Doctor consulted. Promised to offer 1 silver medal to Sitalā	6 months

(*Contd. Table 24*)

Serial No.	Name.	Age.	Sex.	Details of the disease.	Methods of treatment.	Period of suffering.
19.	Rakhal Kotal	86	Male	Rheumatism	Doctor consulted	Chronic
20.	Gobinda Nayek	37	do	Pneumonia	Medicinal herbs by Gunni. Doctor consulted later. Promised one goat to Sitala	20 days
21.	Lakshmi Kotal	10	Female	High fever & congested eye	Byakra and Gunni consulted	1 day
22.	Chunu Nayek	2	Female	Gastric trouble	Doctor consulted. Promised to offer sweets to Sitala	2 days
23.	Nalini Nayek	11	Male	Cholera	Doctor consulted. Promised to offer sweets to Sitala	4 days
24.	Malati Nayek	7	Female	Malaria	Medicinal herbs used	4 days
25.	Kini Mallik	32	Female	Swollen ear	do	4 days
26.	Satish Nayek	1	Male	Gastric trouble	Promised to offer sweets to God Hari	
27.	Jamini Bhakta	35	Female	Malaria	Doctor consulted	15 days

(*Contd. Table 24*)

VILL. KASIPUR AND MAMANSA. P.S. NARAYANGARH (1953-54)

Serial No.	Name.	Age.	Sex.	Details of the disease.	Methods of treatment.	Period of suffering.
1.	Kedar Nayek	70	Male	Fever	Medicinal herbs taken from Gunni	7 days
2.	Kadambini Nayek	50	Female	Chronic headache	Doctor consulted. 2 goats promised to Sitala	10 days
3.	Kulabala Bhakta	80	Female	Weakness due to old age	No treatment	2 years
4.	Jaleswar Nayek	36	Male	Fever, gastric trouble	Doctor consulted	10 days
5.	Bhanu Nayek	29	do	Gastric trouble	do	15 days
6.	Nakphuri Nayek	10	do	Malaria	Medicinal herbs	15 days
7.	Bhaku Nayek	40	do	Fever	do	10 days.
8.	Satya Nayek	20	do	do	Doctor consulted. Promised to offer 1 fowl to Baram	8 days
9.	Khandi Bhakta	9	Female	Pain in the chest	Doctor consulted	9 days
10.	Mangli	32	do	Rheumatism	Medicinal herbs used and later doctor consulted	3 years

(*Contd. Table 24*)

Sirel No.	Name.	Age.	Sex.	Details of the Disease.	Methods of treatment.	Priod of suffering.
11.	Nishi Nayek	50	Female	Malaria	Doctor consulted. Promised to offer sweets to Sitala	15 days
12.	Maheswar Kotal	55	Male	Heart-burn	Medicinal herbs used. Doctor consulted	1 year
13.	Bimal Kotal	10	Male	General anasarca	Doctor consulted	3 Months
14.	Bindu Bhakta	3	Female	do	do	2 months
15.	Lakshindra Kotal	22	Male	Dysentery	do	1 month
16.	Bentu Kotal	30	Male	Asthma	do	11 months
17.	Pramila Bhakta	20	Female	Typhoid fever	do	20 days
18.	Banku Kotal	28	Male	Pneumonia	do	1 month
19.	Sambhu Kotal	23	Female	do	do	do
20.	Kusumi Nayek	72	Female	Brain complaints, defective eye-sight	Medicinal herbs used	do
21.	Khudiram Nayek	22	Male	High fever	do	20 days
22.	Surendra Bhakta	42	Male	Typhoid	do	15 days

Magic and religion exercise profound influence upon the individual, family and the community. These are related to different situations, specially at the time of troubles and uncertainties in their daily life. Taboos, totems with respective behaviour patterns are related to particular type of social conditions and even to-day these restrictions help them in maintaining or cultivating social traditions of the people. Nature spirits, deities, etc. are not only propitiated for the safety of individual or family but also for communal peace and security and in economic activities too.

Since the legendary period, no attempts were made to raise these unfortunate people from the abysmal depths of ignorance and backwardness in which they are steeped head and shoulders till late in 1933 when one Vaishnava hermit named Rajendra Nath Das Brahma Abadhut took up the cause in a spirit of compassionate service and held aloft the hanner of equality of mankind before them. He preached that they were the ancient Savaras of mythological repute, who had attained high spiritual distinction. He said that due to some selfish motives of some interested groups they are now called criminals and treated as such with chronic neglect. By holding out hopes for their future he asked them to change and regulate some of their so-called hated habits and manners. He circulated one pamphlet written in Bengali in which he made them perform *Yajna* or *Homa* by burning clarified butter in a sacred fire. He pursuaded them to change some of their despised practices like eating of pork and the like. But to the utter misfortune of the community, his untimely death dealt a blow to this noble mission, which otherwise could have raised them to a higher level.

Hinduism directly cr indirectly influenced these people as revealed from many of their religious beliefs and practices. Brahminical deities or gods of higher order, though not actually worshipped by them directly, are respected and revered. In places where they are in close contact with

Brahmin priests, e. g. at Pitalkanthi, orthodox Hindu ideas have gone deep into their minds.

Vaishnavism, a major creed of Hinduism, has played a significant role in the life of the Lodhas too. At Kultikri the majority of the Lodhas have, for getting recognisition in the society, adopted the surname of 'Das' or servant of Vishnu in place of their clan or totem name. In that particular village, no sacrifice is offered to Sitalā, Chandi or Baram. There are many examples where Vaishnava mendicants have been employed for nuptial or funeral observances. Rasikananda[14] a famous disciple of Lord Chaitanya (the preacher of Vaishnavism) was born near Rohini under the Police Station of Gopiballabhpur, not far from Kultikri or the other adjoining Lodha villages of that area. His preaching not only influenced the different untouchables or Lodhas but other clean caste Hindus too. But there is practically no organised attempt except by Sri Rajendra Das in 1933 directed to this end. Their oral literature supported by songs etc. show the influence of Vaishnava ballads and the mythical stories of the Hindus.

There is not a single case of conversion to Christianity or Islam. Christianity is accepted in this Locality specially among the Santals and the Koras. Mohammedans are thought to be a community with habits detrimental to the Lodhas according to the statements of different informants.

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[14] Karan, Mahendranath : *Hijlir-Masnad-i-Ala*, Calcutta, 1927.

CHAPTER VIII

FESTIVAL CYCLE

A large number of festivals are in vogue among the Lodhas though these are not always similar to or do not coincide in detail with those celebrated by other castes in the neighbourhood. Some of these are connected with the worship of deities who are supposed to protect them from natural calamities., while others are linked with their economic life. During rituals, blessings are sought from ancestral spirits, the popular belief being that the latter are without any shape and from and hover in the air all around with a pre-disposition to help, if appeased and suitably invoked. When communication is established with these spirits, the benefactors of the families might even suggest specific remedies for specific situations, these being believed to be infallible. Sacrifices for the appeasement of these spirits and deities as well as their ancestors are generally offered in various ceremonies.

The information contained in this chapter was collected from 1952 to 1957 in the Police Stations of Jhargram, Binpur, Sankrail, Nayagram, Kesiari, Dantan, Narayangarh, Khargpur and Sabang. Almost all the festivals described in the paper were witnessed by the writer personally. Their territorial distribution and variations were also noted in detail.

General Features

For the worship of deities they have *Deheri* or the priest and his assistant known as *Taliā* appointed from within the community. Some of the festivals are held on fixed dates while others are observed according to local convenience. Agricultural festivals like the worship of *Bani*, *Sar*, etc. are conspicuously absent in the jungle areas of Jhargram, Jamboni, Binpur, Gopiballabhpur and Nayagram, while they are held with great ceremony in other Police Stations. A few of these festivals and worships again are performed on family basis and are sometimes conducted by the head of the family instead of a priest. *Bāndanā* or 'cattle caressing festival' is celebrated by the Lodhas in the Police Stations of Jhargram, Binpur Gopiballabhpur, Nayagram, Kesiari and Jamboni where the two neighbouring communities, the Mahatos and the Koras, also perform the same ceremony. The *Tusu* festival is observed by the Lodhas of a few villages in Khargpur Kesiari, Jhargram, Nayagram, Jamboni, Gopiballabhpur and Binpur Police Stations.

Some of the villages have permanent shrines locally called *Māṛo* or *Thān* for worship. Such shrines are very common in the Police Stations of Narayangarh, Kesiari and Dantan.

Table 25 enumerates the different festivals celebrated by the Lodhas during a full calendar year. The purposes of worship and the nature of the offerings are also listed in the Table 26.

In addition to these festivals and worships, a few deities have been installed permanently as at Pitalkanthi (Joychandi) and Ma-Mansa (Sitalā and Baṛām Chandi) where daily worships and offerings are made on a modest scale.

As a result of close contact with Vaishnavas and other caste people of the locality, worship of the deity *Satyanārāyān* has become popular with the Lodhas in Kukāi, when they are assisted by the members of the Vaishnava sect. There is no fixed date for the worship of *Basumātā* or Mother Earth and *Dharam Devatā*, God of Righteousness. They are invoked during all wedding ceremonies, or at the time of worship of any other deity performed communally by the Lodhas.

Out of fifteen ceremonial festivals listed in the Table, twelve are mainly religious in nature, associated with eleborate worship and celebrated for different purposes. The deities invoked are Sitalā, Yugini, Baṛām or Gaṛām, Chandi, Manasā, Āshāri, Sar, Lakshmi and Muchri of which Baṛām or Gaṛām and Āshāri are the only male deities. Bāndanā is a 'cattle caressing festival' which begins with the propitiation of cattle and culminates in ceremonial dancing and merry making. Tusu festival is more secular in nature and has no religious significance. Only women participate in this festival. Srāddh is associated with the appeasement of the spirits of dead ancestors.

Generally, the worships done by the Lodhas comprise the following typical phases:—

(i) *Arrangement for the Worship*:—In this phase the exact dates of the festivals are fixed and the amount of subscription per family is determined. Subscriptions are collected from the heads of individual families of the village concerned by the headman or his officials. This sort of preparation starts one month before the actual commencement of the festival.

(ii) *Preliminaries*:—This phase requires collection of various sacred articles for the ceremony. The Deheri prepares a list of these articles which are collected from the villagers or purchased from the market. The shrine is cleansed by women. Decoration, construction of booths or gates, shed or a canopy are done by the younger people.

(iii) *Ceremony proper*:—This phase commences with elaborate rituals like ceremonial filling up of the pots, decoration of the pots or fixation of the pictures of the deities bound in frames behind the earthen platform; and then worship, offering of food articles, flowers, burning of clarified butter; sacrifice and offering of lamps or *Ārati*, etc.

(iv) *Arrangements for Music and Dance*:—Music and dance which constitute the next feature are arranged for two purposes: one in fulfilment of the oracle made by the spirit-possessed man in a trance and the other, for recreational purposes depicting the different attributes of the deites and spirits.

(v) *Ceremonial immersion*:—This is the closing phase of the worship.

TABLE 25

CALENDAR FESTIVALS AND WORSHIPS

Sl. No.	Month	Sl. No.	Festival or worship in honour of	General features	Remarks
1	Vaisāk (April-May)	(i) (ii) (iii) (iv)	Sitalā Yugini Baṛām Chandi	Communal basis; sometimes individuals also offer sacrifices	
2	Jaistha (May-June)	(v)	Manasā	Performed by the medicinemen among the community.	
3	Ashāṛ (June-July)	(vi)	Āshāṛi	Celebrated on communal basis	Found in Jhargram P. S. only
4	Srāban (July-August)	(vii)	Jāthel	Communal festival connected with agriculture	
5	Bhādra (August-Septmber)	—	—	—	—
6	Āsvin (September-October)	(viii) (ix)	Asthami Manasā	Communal festival Individual worship	
7	Kārtik (October-November)	(x) (xi)	Jāthel Bāndanā	Communal, sometimes on individual basis	In Jhargram only

(*Contd. Table 25*)

Sl. No.	Month	Sl. No.	Festival of worship in honour of	General features	Remarks
8	Agrahāyan (November-December)	(xii)	Bani	Associated with agriculture; performed on family basis	
		(xiii)	Lakshmi		
9	Paush (December-January)	(xiv)	Baṛām	Communal	
		(xv)	Sitalā		
		(xvi)	Chandi		
		(xvii)	Yugini		
		(xviii)	Tusu	Communal	Only in Kharagpur P. S.
10	Māgh (January-February)	(xix)	Muchri	Agricultural worship performed on family basis	
		(xx)	Baṛām or Gaṛām	Communal	
11	Phālgun (February-Marth)	—	—	—	
12	Chaitra (March-April)	(xxi)	Natun Hāṇṛi or offering to the manes	Performed or family basis	
		(xxii)	Baṛām	Communal	
		(xxiii)	Sitalā		
		(xxiv)	Yugini		

TABLE 26

FESTIVALS AND THEIR PURPOSES

Sl. No.	Worship of: festivival	Purpose	Nature of offering	Conducted by
1	Sitalā	To escape from the scourge of epidemic diseases like cholera, smallpox, etc.	Elaborate worship with goat & fowl sacrifice	Deheri assisted by other religious officials
2	Yugini	do	A black fowl is sacrificed	do
3	Baṛām of Gaṛām	For welfare of the village	Fowl and goats sacrified with votive offerings	do
4	Chandi	For protection of the village from depradation of wild animals	Elaborate worship, goat sacrifice, terracotta elephants or horses are offered	Deheri. sometimes other other assistants
5	Manasā	To appease the deity of snakes, to make snakes lose their poison	Elaborate worship. A goat or a nestling pegion is sacrificed	Medicineman assisted by his disciples
6	Āshāri	For welfare of the community and for a good harvest	Rarely observed. Accompanied by sacrifice of a pig	Deheri with his assistants

(*Contd. Table 26*)

Sl. No.	Worship of festival	Purpose	Nature of offering	Conducted by
7	Jāthel	Before the commencement of transplantation and the first collection of tusser cocoons in the jungle	No sacrifice; only boiled milk with rice is offered	Deheri with other assistants
8	Asthami	For the welfare of the community	Worship of goddess Sitala during the eighth day of the worship of Durga. No sacrifice	Deheri
9	Bāndanā	For the welfare of cattle	Cattle are bathed and garlanded, and goats or fowl sacrificed	Head of the family assisted by the elderly female members
10 11	Bani & Sar	Connected with the first and last reaping of grains respectively	On family basis. No sacrifice	Head of the family
12	Lakshmi	Goddess of Wealth on special occasions	do	do
13	Tusu	Social festival	Communal basis. Wedding of dolls representing Tusu, with preparation of *pan* cakes	Female members only

(*Contd. Table 26*)

Sl. No.	Worship of festival	Purpose	Nature of offering	Conducted by
14	Muchri	Connected with agricultural operations. Only one such festival was observed	Family basis, fowl sacrificed	Head of the family
15	Srāddh	Offering to the manes for the welfare of the family	On family basis. Sometimes the first fruits etc. are offered. Occasionally fowl are sacrificed	do

Worship of Sitalā

Sitalā is one of the chief deities of the Lodhas as she is believed to preside over several epidemic diseases like cholera, smallpox, etc. She has also six sisters and other attendants who are responsible for several other diseases. Generally, she is worshipped twice a year, occasionally thrice. The suitable days for her worship are as follows:—

(i) Tuesday and Saturday are the only propitions days for her worship.

(ii) Any day in the month of Vaishāk (April-May) specially during the light half of the month.

(iii) On the day of *Makar Sankrānti* or last day of Paush (January-February).

(iv) Occasianally during *Chaitra Sankrānti* or the last day of the Bengali Calendar (March-April).

The celebration is communal in character, but sacrifices are offered by individuals also.

Arrangement of Worship

In Kukāi, the writer happened to witness the festival held on 11th May, 1954. Subscriptions were collected by the village headman, Bipin Mallik, one month before and the collection amounted to rupees sixty-five.

Preliminaries

The headman, along with the village priest, Maheswar, and some of the villagers went to the market of Kesiari and purchased the following articles:—

(i) Earthen vessels—3.

(ii) Small earthen vessels, locally called *gāṛu*—4.

(iii) Earthen lids or covers, locally called *sarās*—8.

(iv) A decorated and coloured necklace of paper, locally called *Chāndmālā*.

(v) Napkins for the deity, locally called *Gāmchā* or *Kāchchā*—2.

(vi) One big picture of the deity, printed on paper, locally called *Meṛ*, the picture being drawn in different colours.
(vii) Vermilion.
(viii) Incense with its new pot.
(ix) One earthen pipe for smoking tobacco locally called *Kalki*.
(x) Fruits and sweets including green cocoanuts, betel leaves and betel-nuts.

The following articles were collected by subscription from the village:—

(xi) Goats and fowl for sacrifice.
(xii) Flowers including *durbā* grass and twigs of the mango tree.
(xii) Sun-dried rice.
(xiv) Some unhusked rice.
(xv) A quantity of honey and milk.

A bundle of plantain leaves was also collected. One ring of jute was prepared on which the sacred earthen pots would be seated after the shed has already been plastered with cow-dung paste. These were kept in the shed in custody of the village priest. On the day before the worship the village priest goes on a fast and refrains from any sexual contact.

The elderly women of the village cleansed the shrine with cow-dung paste and put white dot marks of rice paste on the front wall of the shrine. The male members also prepared a shed supported by a few bamboo poles, the top being covered by plantain and *sāl* leaves resembling a canopy.

The village priest and his assistants took a bath and put on fresh cloth. At about 12 A.M. he went to a tank nearby to fill a special earthen pot with water. This was a long-necked jar with a circular mouth called *Bāṛiā*. The priest was followed by a procession of men, women and children playing on musical instruments, ringing bells, blowing conch-shells and beating *chāngal* drums under the leadership of the village headman. The music continued till the priest completed his work in about two hours and then returned to the shrine. Sitting on the steps of the tank he filled the pot with water. This pot symbolized the Goddess Sitalā. Basumātā or Mother Earth and Dharam Devatā or God of Righteousness are always invoked with incantations during the worship of all other deities. Betel leaves and nuts, vermilion, flowers and sun-dried rice are offered in invoking Dharam Devatā and Basumātā. After that the assistant priest went on sprinkling water on the way back to the shrine on all supposedly unholy things. The pot was carried by the priest on his shoulder and placed on the jute ring on an earthen platform inside the shrine. A little paddy was also placed on a plantain leaf on which the jute ring was placed. The priest then put a mango twig on the mouth of the sacred pot and vermilion marks were painted on its neck. A green cocoanut having a long stalk was also painted with vermilion on the head. This cocoanut was placed on the mouth of the pot with its head forward. Just below the cocoanut, an earthen lid full of paddy had already been put, thus making a place for the cocoanut. A new thread made of *durbā* grass was tied round the neck of the pot. The pot representing Sitalā was then dressed in a garment worn by women. Then the representation of the deity was garlanded with a coloured paper necklace.

The picture of the deity on paper was placed on a frame behind the ceremonial pot before the inauguration of the ceremony.

Then the village priest arranged the sun-dried rice, fruit, sweets, etc. on several plantain leaves before the deity and placed flowers, etc. on another leaf. He then sat for the worship at the place as described in the diagram.

Now the village priest began uttering incantations which are composed of distorted Bengali varying from locality to locality. These are as follows:

'Tomāi pujā dichhi Mā ; Tumi santusta hoy jen, kona

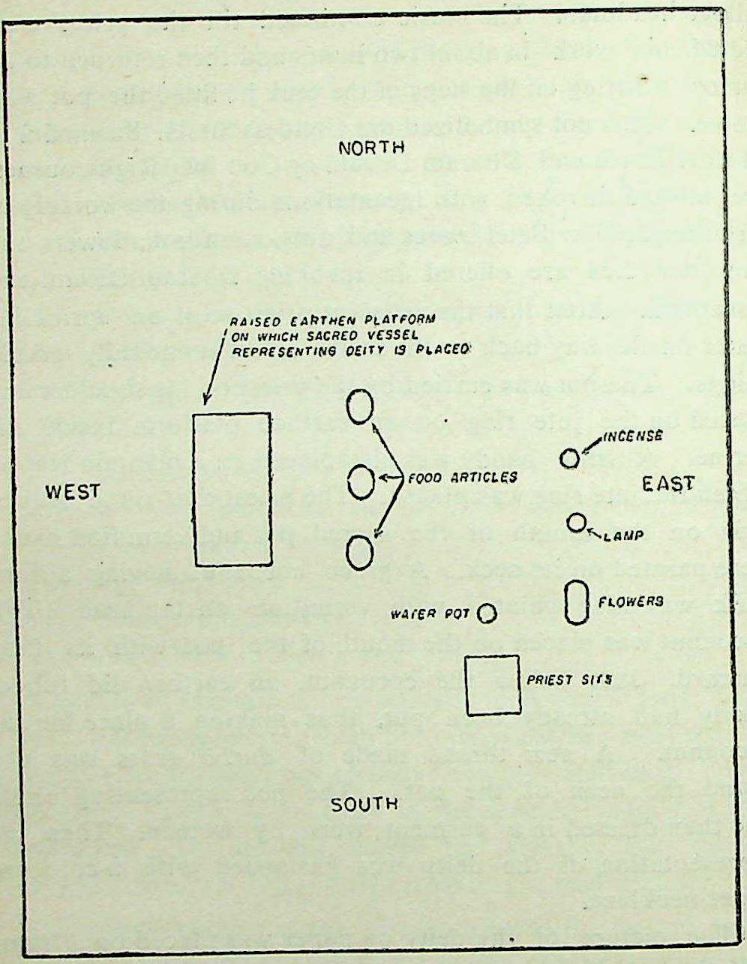
NORTH
RAISED EARTHEN PLATFORM ON WHICH SACRED VESSEL REPRESENTING DEITY IS PLACED
INCENSE
WEST
FOOD ARTICLES
EAST
LAMP
WATER POT
FLOWERS
PRIEST SITS
SOUTH

Fig. 4. Arrangement of articles at the time of Pujā

agaṛ bigaṛ jen nā hoy. Tomār bolir janya pānṭhā deba, murgi deba. Tomār Bhagnike ābār khāyābo. Joṛāpātra, Dākini, Yugini, Rugini, Chāltā Phuliā, Lohā Gaṛiā, sabike pujā deba. Kshir bhog deba. Ghee puṛe Gnāyer amangal dure tāṛābo. Basumātā, Dharam Devatā, Gnāyer Garām, sabāike āj bhog dichhi, Tumi santusta hoy, Jen kāchha chele puler asukh nā hoy.'

FREE TRANSLATION

'May I pay homage to Thee, Mother ! Be pleased, and prevent all the evils ! My I offer a he-goat and hen too for sacrifice ! May I worship Jarāpātra (controlling deity of fever), Dāini (witch), Yugini, Ruginee (maids of Sitalā), Lohāgariā (sister of Sitalā) ! May I feed Thy sister also ! May I offer Thee Kṣhir (boiled milk with rice) ! By burning clarified butter may I drive away all the evils ! Basumātā, Dharam Devatā, Garām of the village, may I offer all of Thee our homage today ! Be pleased Thou and protecteth all our children from the evils and illness !'

At about 4 P.M. the village priest made arrangements for burning clarified butter. A small bundle of dry *ulu* (Impereta arundinacea) grass was made with a knot in the middle and lighted from the burning lamp and placed on the ground before the deity. Little by little, the priest sprinkled a quantity of clarified butter on the fire and recited a short incantation.

Now came the turn of sacrificial rites. The headman ordered the assistant priest to bring some fowl of any colour other than black and male-goats for sacrifice. A sacrificial stake was driven deep into the ground in front of the deity. It it a 'Y'-shaped wooden stake into which animal's neck is fixed during the sacrifice. It is about 3 feet in length.

The village priest came out of the shrine and brought with him a quantity of sun-dried rice and several consecrated flowers and fruits. He ordered the assistant priest to bathe the sacrificial animal in a tank nearby. This was done. Then the priest recited an incantation, and made a vow of sacrifice in the following year. The head of the goat was marked with vermilion and the fowl was treated similarly before sacrifice. A quantity of sun-dried rice was then offered to the goat and the fowl. It is believed that if they eat the rice, the sacrifice is acceptable to the gods. In case the sacrificial animals refuse to take the rice, they are set free and fresh ones are brought instead. The priest then asked his assistant to get ready for the sacrifice. Accordingly, the man applied vermilion marks on his sword and strew some flowers which had already been consecrated. The goat was then brought to the scaffold, a vermilion mark was painted on its forehead and the neck of the animal was fixed to the sacrificial post. The official sacrificer bowed down his head before the deities with folded hands and then with a single stroke he severed the head of the animal. In case of a fowl, the stake was not required. The assistant priest simply caught hold of the fowl and then cut its head with a sharp knife. Then he poured the blood collected in the meanwhile on long plantain leaves spread beneath their throats just in front of the sacrificial post in a new earthen pot and placed the detached heads on a plantain leaf in front of the deity as an offering. While the service was going on the priest recited incantations and the villagers were directed to blow the conch-shells, ring the bells and beat the drums.

Thus the worship ended, and the priest asked every villager to bow down before the deity. They did accordingly and made small offerings of money.

Before dusk, the headman and other village elders decided to distribute the offerings to those who where present at the ceremony and send the rest to the homes of those who failed to come. The priest received the cash paid at the time of salutation, and also the heads of the sacrifical goats and fowl, whereas the assistant priest and the official sacrificer got an extra share of the meat. In respect of presentation of personal sacrifices, the official sacrificer and the assistant priest receive Rs. 1.50 each, whereas the priest receives Rs. 1.50 as his remuneration. Then all the persons including the religious officials returned to their homes. At about 7 p. m. they again came back to the place of worship.

The priest then washed his feet and offered the deity one glass of *sherbet* of sugar and one betel leaf with betel-nuts and a small quantity of hemp for smoking in a new earthen pipe. Before that he lit the earthen lamp and put fire in the incense cup. He offered these earthen lamp and incense cup before the deity with a rythmic movement of hands and incantation, a ritual known as *Ārati* amongst the local people. Then conch-shells were blown and bells were rung.

Arrangement of Music and Dance

As soon as this was over, arrangement was made for holding a dance festival accompained by drums. The villagers assembled in the open space in front of the shrine under a shed or canopy. The dancers who were all males came with their *Chāngals* or drums. They first offered salutation and sang a song in invocation. After this, they sang various songs, like *Bāramāsi* etc. From time to time they heated the skin of the drums over a fire to keep them in proper tune.

During the dance. a person named Gobinda developed signs of possession by spirits. The man threw down his musical instrument and ran to the main road and again came back to the shed almost in a hectic rush. All the time he shook his head violently and shouted loudly. The priest held an incense cup in front of him for making him inhale the smoke. The priest and other elderly men of the village were very much anxious to know the future which he was expected to foretell. The man began to utter the following sentences in a mumbling tone: —

'*Sunago bāchhā. Āmār dese Satya chāṛā mithyā nāi. Āmāke tomarā bhālo bhālo Pujā dis. Āmi toder grāme Milmilā dicchhilām. Torā pujā dibi balte uthiye neichhi. Bāirer lok dekhte āsbe. Āchhā dhum dhām hobe. Pujā karisre bāchhā. Āmāke tin din rākbi. Tin diner par āmi dakshin dike chole jābo. Sekhāne Yugini Pujā karis. Rog, sok, sab dur hobe. Gāon bhālo thākbe.*'

FREE TRANSLATION

'Hear me, O sons! No lie but truth reigns in my dominion. Worship me with the best offerings. I laid a burden of measles upon your village. I have removed it, because you have vowed to worship me. Many people from outside would come here to see me. Worship me with the utmost pomp and grandeur. O Sons! Keep me for three days here and after three days I would repair southwards. Worship Yugini there. Diseases and griefs would all be gone. The village would remain well and peaceful.'

After uttering the oracle the man ran to the main road and again came back to the shrine. The assistant priest then took up a whip made of *sābāi* grass and dealt continuous strokes on the man with it. All on a sudden he became unconscious and after a prolonged tending he got back his senses and the dance continued till late in the night.

In this village this worship is performed for three days at a stretch. In other villages this festival continues for three to five days generally. This, they believe, is the divine will of the deity expressed through the oracle.

Ceremonial Immersion

Early in the morning of the last day, some fruits, *sherbet*, sweets, etc. were offered by the priest to the deity. After that, arrangement for the worship of Yugini was made on the outskirts of the village, which was followed by the ceremonial immersion of the pots. etc. in a nearby tank, Thus the ceremony was over.

In Kukai the worship of Sitalā was held thrice in the year 1954, whereas at Kadamdiha this was performed twice, once in the month of Vaisākh and then again in the month of Māgh. In Parulda, this festival takes place as usual in the month of Vaisākh with sacrifices of goats and fowl and another similar festival is held during the worship of Durgā on the eighth day of the light fortnight, in the name of the Sitalā without any sacrifice. No worship is held at the time of Makar Sankrānti, i.e. on the last day of Paush. In Ma-Mansa, the worship of Sitalā is performed generally twice in the months of Vaisākh and Kārtik. During the festival in the month of Vaisākh in the year 1954, the villagers raised eighty rupees as subscription and two goats and three pied fowl were sacrificed there. One black fowl was also sacrificed in the name of Yugini by Surendra, the official sacrificer.

Worship of Yugini

The worship of Yugini is associated with the worship of Sitalā. This is done on a main road away from the village. All the articles necessary for the worship are purchased or collected from the villagers beforehand and are kept in the shrine. A temporary earthen platform is prepared and cleansed with cow-dung solution and then a black fowl is sacrificed there. The fruits, sweets, even the sacrificial fowl are placed there and the pot is not immersed after the worship is over.

Worship of Barām or Garām

Barām is the tutelary deity of a Lodha village. Generally, each village has one permanently selected big tree or several trees forming a grove. Barām is believed to reside in the tree or grove thus selected. In Jaralata, it is a grove of *sāl* trees, in Mahischhar it is a *begunā* (Vitea negundo) tree, and in village Parulda, there is no tree chosen as the seat of Barām. This festival is held generally on the Makar Sankrānti (last day of Paush) and Chaitra Sankrānti (last day of Chaitra) days. Sometimes on the day of annual worship of Sitalā, the worship of Barām takes place in many villages.

The preparations for the festival are more or less the same as in the case of Sitalā. Sometimes, a new winnowing fan is purchased in which all the articles bought from the market are placed. A few terracotta horses and elephants are also purchased as votive offerings. Black fowl is strictly prohibited for sacrifice to Barām. A red or a pied fowl is the customary sacrifice. In Jaralata, a red flag was purchased and it was tied high up on the tree, which is considered to be the seat of Barām. In several villages, drummers of the Dom caste (untouchables) were employed on cash payment of Rs. 1.50 per head.

Vermilion marks are put on the votive offerings as well as on the tree. To appease Barām the priest utters incantations of which the following is a typical example:—

'He! Bābā Barām! jena kona agar bigar nā hoy. Gnāyer chela pule, goru-mahis sab jena bhālo thāke. Ebāre āmāra ei pujā dichhi. Bhāla thākle āschhe bachhar ābār âobo. Man tusti kore khāyo Thākur! Āmāder dos sab khamā koro.'

FREE TRANSLATION

'Oh! Father Barām! save us from all harms and disturbances. Keep all children, cows and buffalos well. Now we are offering you this homage, and if we keep well we will worship you next year. Eat to Thy heart's content. Oh Lord! forgive us all our faults and shortcomings.'

In Mahischhar, Suren Mallik worshipped the deity Barām. The sacrificial post was set on the day of the ceremony. In Damdasol, one sacrificial post remains always fixed at the shrine of Barām. Several personal votive sacrifices of fowl were made there by the villagers in 1954. In Kukai and Rangtia, sacrifices were made by the official sacrificer. During Makar Sankrānti, i.e. the last day of Paush, they worshipped the deity without any sacrifice. In Rangtia, worship of Barām is associated with the worship of the goddess Sitalā and some other deities. Here the only sacrifice was made at the time of Chaitra Sankrānti, i.e. the last day of Chaitra. One Thura Kotal of this village offered a goat in the year 1954 to Barām. In Ma-Mansa, Barām is worspipped during Makar Sankrānti and sacrifices and offerings of terracotta horses and elephants are made at the time.

Almost all the villages have their Barām who is worshipped with usual sacrifices. Only in Parulda, the easternmost part of the Lodha area, there is no arrangement for such worship.

In Daharpur they have their shrine of Barām lying beyond the outskirts of the village. This is also the case in Khejurkuthi where the seat of Barām is far away from the village.

Worship of Chandi

Chandi is the goddess of the forest, and is supposed to protect people from the attack of wild animals. When she becomes displeased with a particular village or locality the roarings of wild animals may be frequently heard or even their foot-prints are seen on the ground. She is pleased with sacrificial offerings made in her name as a mark of obedience and respect. She resides beneath a tree like the deity Barām, but such a tree is not found everywhere. People of several villages gather round this tree and offer their homage unitedly when occasion arises, but in exceptional cases a particular person under pain of invoking the deity under her malevolent influence, observes the festival alone. *Joy Chandi* of Pitalkathi only has a temple for her worship.

The worship of Chandi is performed in the same manner in almost all the villages where a shrine is maintained for her. Other villages do not perform this worship but only present their offerings and sacrifices to the deity at the places where Chandi is supposed to reside. Generally, there is a separate Deheri for the worship of Chandi.

Joy Chandi of Pitalkanthi referred to before is worshipped regularly by the Lodhas as well as by the Brahman priests. A few terracotta elephants and horses of big size are offered to her by different castes. A special worship of her by villagers belonging to all communities is held at the time of the worship of goddess Durgā in the month of Āsvin or Kārtik as the case may be. Besides these many sacrifices of goats, one buffalo is also sacrificed on this particular occasion. No fowl are sacrificed here. Drummers are employed to provide music in this worship as is usual. In other villages *Chāngal* drums are played on the occasion by the Lodhas only.

Worship of Manasā

Manasā is the goddess of snakes. She is worshipped only by medicine-men who carry on the profession of catching snakes and counteract snake poison by means of their magical charms or incantations. One Sital Ahari of Kadamdiha used to worship every year the goddess Manasā on the 13th of Jaistha. In the year 1956 he took four disciples, namely, Chamtu, Kanta, Banka and Bhim. The cost of the initiation ceremony was borne by the disciples. The ceremony was started on 13th Jaistha. On the courtyard of Sital Ahari an earthen platform 3 feet in length, 2 feet in breadth and 6 inches in height, known as *Ākhrā*, was constructed by his disciples. The following materials were purchased by them from the market. This worship also requires the preparations as described before.

Besides the requisite articles, one pack of vermilion and one small pigeon were also collected by his disciples. Propitiation and sacrifice were done by Sital the preceptor. Meat and other articles were distributed to the disciples and the persons who assembled there. No drummers were engaged on this occasion.

In the same way, there would be a worship of Manasā on the Dāk Sankrānti day (last day of the month of Āsvin) as the training session would be over on that day. This worship is restricted to the medicine-men or their apprentices, though other villagers or children might attend the function.

Jāthel Festival

Jāthel festival is celebrated generally in the month of Āshar (June-July). This ceremony is connected with the economic life of the Lodhas. Before the beginning of agricultural work, they in their faith in the supreme powers of the deities, pray for their mercy for an yield of good crops. The deity to be worshipped on this occasion is no other than Barām in his respective seat in the villages. In the forest area, tusser cocoon production as an alternative to agriculture is taken up by them. So they observe this Jāthel festival in the month of Kārtik (October-November) just before the collection season of tusser cocoon, whereas in the plain areas, on the cultivable land, this ceremony is also performed when weeding is begun after the plants have grown up sufficiently.

This ceremony requires a good many articles. On a newly purchased earthen pot *Kṣhir*, i.e. a gruel of rice, sugar and milk is prepared by the priest on a newly prepared oven. This is offered to Barām and later also distributed to the villagers. The priest prays for a good harvest and for overcoming any unforeseen calamities that might hold back agricultural operations. Nobody is allowed to weed the paddy field by plough or transplant until this festival is over. If anybody cannot avoid ploughing his paddy field on that day, he would have to pay the penalty of a few pice separately to the deity concerned, i.e. the deity Barām.

In Ma-Mansa, during the Jāthel festival, some of the villagers sacrificed fowl and goats in redemption of their pledge to do so this year, as they had a bumper crop last year. No gruel of rice, sugar and milk was offered there to Sitalā. It was offered to Barām. In Dihipur the Jāthel festival took place in the month of Bhādra (August-September in 1954) due to delay in the approach of the monsoon. No sacrifice of animals was made there.

But in Kadamdiha this festival takes place generally in the month of Kārtik (October-November) when the people begin to collect tusser cocoons in the jungle. There they celebrated in 1955 the festival near the place of the Barām with the usual offering of gruel, and one fowl and one sheep were sacrificed.

It is interesting to note here that in several villages in Jhargram Police Station the writer did not find any Jāthel festival. In Jaralata, Bachhurdoba, Dubrajpur, Radhanagar, the villagers have very vague ideas about the celebration of this festival.

Worship of Āshāṛi

Sometimes it is called as *dhulā* or dust ceremony. One Suren Mallik of Mahischhar gave this information of his performance of this festival. He said that this festival is also called Jāthel by some of the Lodhas, and is a peculiar one because it is associated with the sacrifice of a pig. This was found by the writer at one place only. The informant said that this is a communal ceremony and he generally performs it as the priest of his village. The sacrifice and offerings are made in the name of *Asāri Ṭhākur* or God of Āshāṛ.

The ceremony was performed at the Barām's place near a streamlet. A few pan-cakes prepared by the womenfolk from pounded sun-dried rice, were offered to the deity. A pig and a fowl were sacrificed with regular incantations. The heads of the sacrificed animals were buried there. Other articles of worship were carried back. The pan-cakes were also left at the place of worship.

The female members of the priest's family again pounded a few seers of sun-dried rice by means of a husking lever. The meat of the pig and the fowl were cleaned up separately. On the courtyard a hearth was made and the meat of the sacrificial pig was boiled there. The meat of the fowl was sent inside the kitchen for cooking. When the meat of the pig was sufficiently boiled, it was taken out and the rice powder was mixed with it on the new winnowing fan. This was wrapped with *sāl* leaves and baked.

Only the male members of the village were allowed to take this baked meat. Women took the meat of the fowl only.

Suren also said that after the harvest this ceremony takes place again in the paddy field.

Worship in Astami

This is nothing but the worship of goddess Sitalā during the Durgā Pujā. It was performed in the same way as the worship of Sitalā without any sacrifice. This is a communal festival and was performed in Parulda and a few other villages under the Police Stations of Narayangarh and Khargpur.

Worship of Mother Goddess Kāli

The Lodhas are not found to worship the goddess *Kāli* individually or communally. In Parulda they participated in the ceremony with other villagers organised under the auspices of the neighbouring Hindus. They paid their share of subscription and received some quantity of sacrificial meat or other offerings.

Bāndanā or Cattle-Caressing Festival

This festival is generally held during the new-moon in the month of Kārtik when Kāli is worshipped by the local Hindus. Properly speaking, it is not a festival of the Lodhas; it belongs more specially to the Koras and Mahatos. In this particular festival the people mentioned above pay respect to the cattle which are regarded as incarnations of the goddess *Bhagabati* or wealth. This festival has got three phases with three types of rituals.

First Phase

The day of waking on new-moon day or 'vigil'. The men keep up all night, while women would also remain engaged in preparing cakes or for making other preparations ready for the festival.

Second Phase

It is the second day of welcoming or kissing the cattle or rather a day of worship. The actual worship, the garlanding of cattle, etc. accompanied with sacrifice take place on this day.

Third Phase

On the day of dancing, the expert hero boys play and dance on the ground before the bulls and provoke them by constant poking, singing and drumming.

This *Bāndanā* or 'cattle-caressing festival' is prevalent in almost all the concentrated villages except a few places of Sadar Sub-division of Midnapur. Specially the Lodhas of the following villages were found to celebrate the function each year: Jaralata, Auligeria, Dubrajpur, Khatgeria and Tetala, etc. It was reported that almost all the villages of Jhargram, Jamboni and Binpur Police Stations celebrated this festival in the same way as the neighbouring people did it, whereas in Nayagram and Gopiballavpur Police Stations this festival differs in details. According to some of the local informants, this festival is a communal one of the Mahatos connected with their cattle. However, several Lodhas were found by the writer to perform it with all its phases and with popular outbursts of cheers and excitement.

One typical case is cited below:—

Jaralata has several Lodha and a few Santal families. On the evening of the worship of Kāli (7th November, 1953) all the men of the village including the Lodhas and the Santals came out of their homes with their musical instruments. They sang several songs which are generally composed in corrupt Bengali. All night they moved from one house to another while singing in chorus. They also drank freely rice beer or country-made wine. Several Lodha families of this particular village possess cattle, as for example, Jharu Lodha, Rabin Lodha, etc. In their homes the womenfolk prepared cakes, etc. for worship on the next day, The songs are known as *Jāgān* or waking songs which are described in the next chapter. This sort of music continued till next morning.

Second Day

Early in the morning Jharu's wife took her bath and put on a new *sāri*. She prepared cakes from rice flour, and after placing them on a brass platter along with *durbā* grass, went to the cowshed. There she fed the cows with the cakes and grass and undid the ropes. She then prayed as follows:—

'Gariber ghara āsecha. Sāpe baghe jeno bighna nā hoi. Mon tusti kore khāo'.

FREE TRANSLATION

'Thou hast come to the house of a poor man. Let there be no harm done either by snakes or by tigers. Eat heartily'.

After this she let the cow loose. The arrangement for worshipping the tutelary deity of the cow had been made by her. This worship is sometimes called by the Lodhas *Ghoroā Pujā*.

Jharu's son Deben propitiated the deity with sacrifice of a fowl. During propitiation he prayed again:—

'Gotā gāon jen bhāla thāke. Ebare jā pāchhi tāi dichhi. Man tusti kore khāyo. Āmār gorur jen sāpe bāghe kon bighna nā hoy. Tāhale ābār deba. Ābār tomāke pujā deba'.

FREE TRANSLATION

"Let the whole village live free from illness. I offer Thee what I have got. Eat to Thine heart's content. Be careful so that no harm might be done either by tiger or snake to the cattle. I will feed and worship Thee again if these animals are protected."

Before dusk the female members became ready to welcome or receive the cows. The widows are strictly forbidden to attend this function. The womenfolk painted the way to the cowshead with several floral and circular designs by means of a solution of pounded rice. They also placed *durbā* grass on these designs as an auspicious mark. The women (mother and wife of Deben) took one brass plate containing some sun-dried rice, *durbā* grass and vermilion, mustard oil and flower garlands. They were anxiously waiting for the cows to return. The women were on fast and observed the customary abstinence. At about 12 A.M. Deben's farther Jharu washed the cows and cleansed their hooves. When the cows were returning from the field the two female members of Jharu's family applied mustard oil on their horns and vermilion marks on their forehead. Later they garlanded the cows and prayed for blessings as before. They also fed them with sweets.

After finishing this rite all the members took their meals.

Third Day

This day is called the day of dancing. On the fallow land of the village of Jaralata several bamboos were posted to the ground. Several young bulls brought from the neighbouring Santals, Mahatos, etc. were tied to each of the post. A group of men irrespective of caste and community gathered round the place and began to infuriate the beasts by constant drumming, singing and dancing. One or two persons of the group held a piece of skin of cow or buffalo in front of the animals in turn and were engaged in a mock combat with the bulls. The bulls became furious and tried to charge them with their horns. A big crowd gathered there to enjoy the fun. Songs were composed in praise of the qualities of the animals. This playful ceremony continued for several hours. Both Lodha and non-Lodha malefolk participated in the festival.

In several villages this festival lasts for two days though the bull-fight is not a custom prevailing everywhere.

Worship of Muchri

This is an agricultural festival. This spirit, *Muchri*, has got no defiinite standing in the heirarchy of gods or deities according to the report of some Lodha informants. He is believed to rule over the paddy field and the festival following his worship was only found here. This is generally held in the paddy-field after harvest. Gourhari Kotal of Kukai, worshipped Muchri, the spirit of the paddy field, on the Makar Sankrānti day. He was the only person who was observed worshipping this spirit. Every year he sacrifices one red fowl to the spirit Muchri who is believed to protect his grains from the the evil eyes of spirits or witches and other natural calamities.

Worship of Bani

This is also an agricultural festival practised by the Lodhas living in contact with the agrarian communities. This festival is celebrated in Parulda only. One Dharani Digar of Parulda has some land in which he finished planting in due time. As on the first day of the harvest this ceremony is commonly performed, Dharani consulted an astrologer for fixing up an auspicious day for the first reaping. The astrologer suggested a date to him, and he went to the spot before dusk on that day. He took with him only a sickle. Nobody followed him. After reaching the paddy-field he stood facing east and selected one area full of ripe paddy. He saluted the unseen deity with folded hands and holding the plants with his left hand cut them with the sickle and kept each handful of paddy with stalks one upon another until a big bundle was made. Then he lifted this bundle on his head and returned home. On his way back speaking to anyone was taboo for him. When the women of the household saw him returning, they blew conch-shells to welcome the august arrival of paddy. This grain represented *Lakshmi* or the Goddess of Wealth. He kept it on the thatched roof of his house. On that day the family members took puffed rice and sweets only. Thus the ceremony was over.

Warship of Lakshmi

Lakshmi is the Goddess of Wealth. From harvesting time onwards, during the months of Agrahāyan and Paush (November-January), Lakshmi is propitiated in every Hindu home on each Thursday. Some of the Lodhas of Parulda follow some traditions of the local peasantry and offer sweets, water-chest-nuts and some sun-dried rice to Lakshmi every Thursday. One wooden seat is marked with vermilion and thought to be the seat of Goddess Lakshmi. One betel-nut with a small quantity of paddy is laid on the seat as the emblem of the deity. Harekrishna Paramanik of Parulda, who is a Lodha, propitiated the deity in his own home every year.

No other Lodha was observed to worship Lakshmi in this manner.

Worship of Sar

This is also an agricultural festival celebrated by each and every individual Hindu cultivator family in Midnapur. On the last day of the harvest, a particular paddy bundle of ripe plants is carried home as is done in the worship of Bani already described, by the head of the family, and kept on the thatched roof of the house. This festival varying in some details is also celebrated by the Lodhas. In Parulda, Harekrishna Paramanik, had reaped all his paddy except a small portion of it. He went to the paddy field before dusk and rooted out the remaining plants by pulling them up. Then he made a big bundle of them and carried it home on his head. While he was coming back, the family members blew conch-shells as a sign of welcome. Harekrishna kept these stalks on the thatched roof of his room. On the last day of Paush, the worship of *Sar* is celebrated. On that day Harekrishna cleansed his courtyard with cow dung solution and drew several figures of cow and of agricultural appliances which were painted with the rice-dust solution. He also kept his agricultural tools on the courtyard and piled a quantity of grains there. Then, just after dusk, he applied vermilion marks on the grains and other agricultural appliances as well as on the figurines drawn on the courtyard. At that time the female members of his family kept on blowing conch-shells. Then they began to watch for the howling of jackals. The belief is that rains would start in the direction from which the howling is first heard. All the members bowed down on the courtyard before the heap of grains and agricultural appliances. That night the family members took fruits and puffed rice only. Thus the ceremony ended.

Tusu Festival

The word *Tusu* in regional dialect connotes a doll, and this particular festival is celebrated by the Mahatos generally.

Now this festival is also celebrated by the Koras, Lodhas and the Bagals—the neighbouring communities of the Mahato. This provides a great social forum in which all women of the above-mentioned communities participate. A few dolls are purchased from the market just before the commencement of the festival on the last day of Paush. A few songs composed in corrupt Bengali are sung by women who also prepare cakes on the occasion and pass the night in singing, merry-making and arranging for the wedding of the Tusus.

Srādh Ceremony or Offering to the Manes

On the last day of the year, or Chaitra Sankrānti, almost all Lodhas offer food to the manes on the *Isān* or a raised platform near the hearth. This ceremony is also known as *Nutan Hānṛi* or 'initiation of new pots'. On that day the old used earthen pots are generally thrown away or kept behind the house in a upturned position. Some of the Lodha informants told the writer that this ceremony is called *Hānṛi Pujā* or worship of new pots. Budha Lodha of Bagmuri sacrificed one red fowl on the platform in the name of his ancestors on that particular day. He dressed it outside the room. After dressing he observed fast until the ceremony was over. After preparation of meals he placed nine *sāl* leaves on each of which he placed a small quantity of rice and meat curry on the earthen platform. With all these articles Budha sat facing the east with folded hands and made the following prayer to the manes or ancestors.

'*Āmāder chhānāpinār jena kona agar bigar nā hoy. Āmrā jā pāichhi tā dichhi.*'

FREE TRANSLATION

'Let our children peacefully live in sound health. I offer Thee what I have got.'

After this he kept one new winnowing fan in upturned position upon the dedicated food and went away. After a while he gave two country-made cigars duly lit up on the two sides of the earthen platform. The offering was cast into water the next day.

The *Srāddh* ceremony also precedes the rituals of the wedding ceremonies of the Lodhas, but no sacrifice is made then.

Offering of the First Fruits

This is also another ceremony in which the first fruits of the year are offered to the deities Basumātā and Dharam Devatā. Generally, in the month of Phālgun (February-March) new mango or *mahuā* flowers are offered to the deities near a tank. The head of a family offers these after taking his bath.

One Bhuban Lodha of Jaralata was observed to offer one green mango and several *mahuā* flowers every year. He cut the mango into nine pieces with a knife and took nine *mahuā* flowers. He kept these on two *sāl* leaves separately. He saluted the deities with folded hands facing the east and at last took eight pieces of mango and eight *mahuā* flowers out of the offering for his family members, leaving only one piece of mango and one *mahuā* flower there. It is reported by some of the Lodhas that after this ceremony the family members can consume green mangoes or *mahuā* flowers freely. This ceremony is not observed everywhere.

Detailed analysis of the modes of festivals and worships would show that different cultural traits have been incorporated by the Lodhas. In village life, all these festivals have got a special significance of their own as they are associated with specific socio-economic and religious purposes adjusted to the requirements of the people.

Worship of Barām or Garām is prevalent in almost all Lodha villages, except the village of Parulda, which is in the easternmost boundary of the Lodha territory. In the same way, a few agricultural festivals like the worship of Bani, Sar, Lakshmi or Goddess of Wealth and Kāli are prevalent in this particular village only. This village is mostly inhabited by the clean caste Hindu groups and the Lodhas have lived in close and friendly contact with them for a long time. As a result, a good number of agricultural festivals are celebrated both by the Hindus and the Lodhas there which are conspicuous by their absence in other areas.

Worships of Goddesses like Sitalā, Chandi, Manasā and Kāli which the Lodhas perform, are in vogue all over eastern India and it may be said that these form part of the great Hindu tradition. But in matters of details these worships vary widely. First of all, the Lodhas are denied the services of the Brahman priests in their social and religious celebrations. Any standardised pattern of incantations or methods is absent amongst them. Due to long contact with the aggressive neighbouring Hindus, they have assimilated only the outer structure of their rituals with an ingrained tribal pattern of their own as the bases of their worships and ceremonies. Thus a few articles of worship or mode of propitiation are found common both to Brahmanical pattern and the Lodha usage. They also burn incense, use *tulasi*, *durbā*, vermilion and a few other items as the Hindus do.

Sitalā is also worshipped by the local clean-caste and depressed caste people in this district. When she is installed in a Brahman's place, she is worshipped by a Brahman priest. Cooked rice, fish curry, etc. are offered to her. But when she is installed in a non-Brahman family and worshipped by a Brahman priest, she is never offered cooked rice or curry. Only raw grains for cooking are offered to her and a goat or sheep is sacrificed. The Lodhas, in addition to this, sacrifice fowl. Yugini is not worshipped separately at the outskirts of the village with the sacrifice of black fowl by any caste other than the Lodhas.

In the same way the goddesses Chandi and Manasā are worshipped by the Lodhas with the help of a special Deheri or medicineman attending to conduct the rituals. Chandi as well as Manasā are also worshipped by the clean-caste groups, but there special virtues and qualities of high ethical level are attributed to them unlike what is done by the Lodhas.

Barām or Garām is the tutelary deity of a village and is worshipped by the Lodhas as well as by some other communities like the Patras or Chirmars. But they consider Barām as a female deity and do not sacrifice any fowl to her. Even the Lodhas of Ma-Manasa sometimes call Barām Barām Chandi, a confused term, but they consider him to be a male god. The worship of Barām is absent in the village of Parulda only.

Celebration of Jāthel is associated with the agricultural life of the Lodhas. Muchri, Āshāṛi are also agricultural festivals performed only in two villages but their distribution is very restricted.

Bāndanā is a cattle-caressing festival celebrated with the worship of cattle and rejoicings. This is a festival of the Mahatos or the Koras. Lodhas of the Mahato-Kora concentrated areas celebrate it due to their long contact with the Mahatos who are found to participate along with the Lodhas in this festival. Tusu is also a regional festival. This particular festival is performed by many Lodha families of Khargpur Jhargram, Binpur, Nayagram and Gopiballavpur Police Stations.

Srāddh or offering to the manes is also performed by the Hindus on specific occasions and Lodhas, but cooked rice and curry with country-made cigars are not offered to the spirits of the dead ancestors although the latter do so.

Besides these religious, semi-religious, social, secular and ancestral festivals, the Lodhas of Kukai celebrate a few holidays such as the Republic Day (26th January). the Independence Day (15th August), birth-day of Vinoba Bhabe (11th September) and birth-day of Mahatma Gandhi (2nd October). These festivals are organised by the local Seva Kendra, which works for the uplift of this community in the area. In the year 1955 the people of this village organised a fair on the Republic Day and staged a drama with success there.

Caste solidarity is maintained among the Lodhas in respect of their economic activities. But on festive occasions certain amount of relaxation is observed among them in many areas. As for example, in Parulda, the local caste Hindu groups demand subscriptions from the Lodhas and encourage their participation to some extent in the village festivals. In Pitalkanthi and Ma-Manasa the higher caste groups also offer propitiation and sacrifices through the agency of Lodha priests to these deities and with the passage of time this system has been well maintained and tolerated by the clean-caste groups.

CHAPTER IX

RECREATIONAL LIFE

The Lodhas, as is usual with mankind, seek diversion through recreations in their day-to-day monotonous life. These include evening chats, popular folk tales and participation in games, dance and music. Poverty may have damped their spirit to an appreciable extent but by nature they are a lively and merry-making people and indulge in many feasts and festivals. In a simple family, grown-up boys and girls and even those of tender age, help their parents by taking care of their tiny brothers and sisters when they go out in pursuit of their daily avocations. Naturally, these young children pass their time absorbed in gay abandon in petty games, folk tales, songs and dances. Children are rarely given any toys or dolls by their parents but they feel glad in picking up potsherds from here and there. Sometime, however, some one among them make clay dolls and offer a piece to each one of the group as a play thing.

Older generations are the treasure house of the traditional folk tales and oral literature. Sometimes they, at their leisure or restful days or when engaged in gossip, recount interesting and absorbing stories with romantic gestures which are appreciated by the listeners. Specially interesting are the events related in connection with the queer ways of different deities and spirits. In this way traditional norms of the society, oral literature and the various beliefs and ideas current among the tribe are kept alive and handed down to the posterity, which they accept as a normal phase of life and hold on to them with unwavering zeal. Thus the cultural heritage is maintained through generations with little adjustments here and there as are necessitated under changing circumstances. The writer had the good fortune of having a hearty conversation with a group of Lodha boys and girls and to befriend them, which provided him with an opportunity to probe deeply into different aspects of their society and also the advantage of participation in many of their festivals which further facilitated his study of the trend of acculturation of this tribe in relation to specific periods of history. However, we also find modern popular songs, as the folk songs, *Bāramāsi* songs, the film hits including *Jātrā Gāns*, etc. to be just as popular among a section of the Lodhas, particularly the younger people as their counterparts in the more advanced social groups. *Bhoodān*[1] (Land Contribution) Movement connected with free gift of land is again one of their current trends. In Kukai, their was a Jātrā performance exclusively organised by the Lodhas under the auspices of the Seva Kendra which was a unique show of their cultural achievements. In almost all the villages there are *chāngals* or circular drums which are generally used during music. Besides this a few modern instruments are also found. One Gopal of the same village has an organ and other modern instruments like *Tablā*, etc. Again Santosh Kotal of Dihipur has got some modern musical instruments and he learns this art under a local musician of repute.

Games

Games are conspicuously few in the Lodha society. Some of these are also common in the vicinity. For instance, the *Hā-do-do* which the Lodhas play, is a common game throughout the district of Midnapur. In two places like Ma-Manasa and Kukai, Lodha boys are even found to play football with other boys.

Tālkāti

The literal meaning of this game is 'dividing the palm fruit'. A number of little boys usually join in playing this game, but girls, too, may take part in it. Children of 7 to 12 years of age generally participate in this game, the number of players varying between three and eight. Players generally sit in a circle and place their closed palm one upon the other in the centre. One player has to lead the game, and he or she has to place his or her left palm closed first. Upon that palm all other players would place theirs without setting them all in a definite direction. When all of them have thus placed their palms in a position, the leader would recite a doggerel verse and at once strike the right palm vertically on the wrist of another player. The verse is composed in a rythm and with each stroke the following few words are pronounced:—

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[1] Bhoodān is a socio-economic movement sponsored by Acharya Vinoba Bhabe.

'Tālkāti, tālkāti, khejurkāti.
Ānṭibenehe, sāk dibe, kadamgāchher kali.
Kalilai, kalilai kiserichāo'.

FREE TRANSLATION

'I am cutting palm-fruits, cutting palm-fruits and date-palms. Kali (name of a boy) of Kadamgachh (a place) will give greens in bundles. Not Kali, not Kali, whose son is this Kali ?'

'Ratha kare khasar masar pāṭ kine dāo.
Pāṭer bhāre chal te nāri kandhe tule dhara'.

FREE TRANSLATION

'The chariot-drawing festival is approaching. Give me (a cloth of) jute. I cannot move due to heavy weight of jute (cloth). Please take me on your shoulder.'

When the verse is finished the leader suddenly strikes the closed palms placed one upon another horizontally and thus cuts the 'palm-tree'.

Then all of them would sit cross-legged placing their hands upon the shoulders of each other making a complete circle. The players then recite another verse in chorus.

'Teli ghare tel kaesa,
Bāmun ghare malā piṭhā,

Āre tel kai?
Garugum pāirā'.

FREE TRANSLATION

'The oil extraction is going on. Many cakes are being prepared in the Brahman's house. Where is the rest of the oil? The pigeon has finished it,'

In this way the players go on playing with as many players as there are in the party, each leading the game in turn. This game has no particular time or season. Generally, the courtyard or open land or even the outer portion of the hut is used for this purpose. The players sit on the ground close to each other.

The leader moves his hand in an anti-clockwise swing starting from top to bottom.

Ekir-Mikir

This is an interesting game of Lodha children. Both little boys and girls participate in it. Generally, three to five players are required for this purpose, and the age of the players vary from 7 to 10 years. The players sit on the ground in a courtyard, an open land or a verandah in a circle facing the centre. Before the beginning, the players stretch out their fingers of both the hands and place them horizontally on the ground in front of them. One of the youngsters leads the game. The leader is required to place his or her left palm on the ground, and by means of his or her right hand touch the middle finger of each child in a clockwise manner. At that time he or she cites a verse in a melodious tune:—

'Ikir mikir, dānt kirkir.
Labi lakur,
Asathgāch batgāch,
Tār majhe Jagannāth,
Jagannāther kāndi,
Saru chaul bāndi'.

FREE TRANSLATION

'My teeth are pressing each other with a squeeking sound, being anxious in greed. The peepal tree, the banyan tree—Jagannāth (deity) is in between these. The Kāndi (offering) of Jagannāth is prepared by pounding fine rice'.

The leader reciting the verse all the time in a rythm touches the hands of each player. Where the verse is finished the boy or the girl is required to raise that particular hand upwards. In this way all their hands are expected to be raised within a short time leaving only one hand as it is. The last person whose hand is left out, puts questions to the rest.

Question : What is on your head?
All of them reply : A basket of vermilion.
Question : Would you give me some of your vermilion?
Reply : No, I can't. My mother-in-law will take a bath.
Question : What is under your arms?
Reply : It is a kitten.
Question : Would you give me a kitten?
Reply : No, my mother-in-law will take a bath.

The game ends here. It is, however, repeated several times. There is no particular season, date or place for this game which is widely prevalent in the Police Stations of Kesiari, Narayangarh and Nayagram.

Ubur-Dubur

Here is another interesting game among the Lodha children of Midnapur. All children may participate in it but their age should not generally exceed ten years. The number required to play this game varies between five and seven. The players form a circle and sit on the ground with closed palms. These are placed separately and vertically on the ground but not in the centre as in *Tālkāti* game described before. One person is blind-folded keeping his palms on his eyes. He is called *Kāwā* or the 'crow'. Another boy would then take an earthen nodule in the right hand and try to keep it in the closed palms of the other players during the recitation of a verse. When the verse is finished, the 'Kāwā' is asked to open his eyes and detect the hand wherein the earthen nodule lies. The suspected player is requested to open his hand to show whether he possessed the nodule or not. If his guess is correct, the player with the nodule would be blind-folded or made 'Kāwā.' If the suspected boy does not have the nodule, then the previous 'Kāwā' has to be blindfolded again. In this way the game goes on.

The verse is recited in a chorus by all without the 'Kāwā' taking part in it : —

'Ubur dubur pānmohari,
Kanch kalatir ghar chouri,
Pāser topa kai dere
Suābelar po.'

FREE TRANSLATION

'Ubur dubur (a meaningless word) Pānmohari (a meaningless word). The house of the green plantain has been stolen. You, the man by the side say (who is the culprit)? O! son of Suābela (say)!'

Dudh de Guṛ de

This is also another interesting game of the locality in which the Lodha boys also participate. Boys of 10 to 14 years of age generally participate in this game. Only five can play this game at a time. Four players stand on an open land or courtyard at a distance of 5 feet apart while the other boys stand in the middle. The boys jump simultaneously to replace one another in the chain. As soon as one fails to do so at a single jump, the place left vacant is immediately occupied by the boy at the centre. The boy thus displaced goes to the centre and the game proceeds as before. During this game the boys shout '*Dudh De, Guṛ*

De', *'Dudh De, Guṛ De'* continuously, meaning 'give us milk and treacle.'

This game is widely prevalent in Kesiari and Narayangarh Police Stations.

Kānāmāchhi

Kānāmāchhi or 'blindman's buff' or playing the 'blind-fly' is a very common game among Lodha children at Kukai. This particular game has been introduced by some teacher from outside. Both little boys and girls take part in it. Some 5 to 20 boys or girls are required to play this game. Among them one boy or girl is blind-folded by means of a napkin. Then one of the players takes him to the centre and pushes him onwards saying:

'O ! blind-fly, touch any one you could get at.'

Then this blind-folded boy has to catch one of the players and tell his name correctly. If he succeeds in doing so, the boy whose name has been correctly guessed is in his turn blind-folded, and the game continues till each has had his turn.

Keṛā Dang or Tipcat

This is another favourite game of the Lodhas. It is not confined to their community alone, but is played elsewhere in the same district. In this game both boys and girls of 6 to 12 years take part. Little children assemble generally with one long stick of wood of any kind (1½ ft.) and another smaller wooden stick (½ ft.) the two ends of which are slightly pointed.

At first all the players stand in a row and the boy standing first in the line from the right side is entitled to throw the smaller piece of wood to a distance. Then he goes up and hits the smaller stick with the larger one. When the smaller stick rises high, he tries to send it to as long a distance as possible by hitting it with great force. Now the distance is measured by means of the longer one and thus points are counted. Anybody failing to hit the smaller stick by the larger one loses his chance.

These are the common games of the Lodha boys and girls in the district of Midnapur.

Dancing and Music

Dancing and music form an important aspect of recreation of the Lodhas. These are generally monopolised by men and performed on festive occasions. From their very boyhood some of the Lodhas develop them to a high standard. During frequent visits of the writer to Midnapur, several gatherings were organised and performances of dance and music held. It is peculiar that women never take part in dance or music. All the young people and even the aged male members of the society know most of the songs and dances. They use one typical musical instrument called *Chāngal* or *Bāi Kundali*. These instruments are not exclusive communal properties. Each family has one such instrument without exception.

During festivals proper tuning is made by heating the skin of the instrument on a fire prepared with straw. Heating is done every time after the close of music. This instrument is in use only among the Lodhas of Midnapur.

Another musical instrument used by the Lodhas is known as *Mādal*. It is used to keep time with songs during the *Bāndanā* festival or *Jhumur* song. This instrument is hung on the neck during operation. Generally, during festive occasions like the worships of Barām or Sitalā dances are arranged. The expert dancers or musicians from different villages are invited to take part in the festivals and thus inter-village friendship is strengthened. A dancing party consists of three or four persons.

Normally, the dancers form a long line, not a circle, but the line moves in a curve and revolves in a circle always in an anti-clockwise direction. Grown-up children or aged persons take part in it. During such occasions a few persons become possessed by spirits and foretell the future. To start the dance, the right foot is moved forward and the left follows it. After one step the backward movement begins and the dancers retreat two steps, pressure being applied on the heels. Then they go on moving with a greater intensity in a forward motion. After a few steps (not uniform and generally four or five) they again move back two steps as usual and thus the dance is repeated and the whole party moves in a circle, the nature of forward and backward movement being always in the shape of a crescent. Sometimes they take a pause at the last line or stanza of the song accompanying the dance and drums are beaten loudly at such refrains. The dance is monotonous and without any variation. There is no special costume for this purpose.

When the prayer or song of invocation is sung the dancers sit on their right legs and the musical drum is kept near the folded left leg and slight drumming is done. At the end of the prayer song, salutations are offered to the deities or spirits mentioned in the song. Held in the left hand generally, these drums are played by the right hand. During the progress of a song these are played mildly by beating with the second, third and fourth fingers on the fringe of the instrument while in a pause of dancing vigorous drumming is made in the middle to produce loud notes.

Music and Song

The communal songs of the Lodhas are composed in corrupt Bengali. Some Oriya words can also be recognised. The songs of the Lodhas may be classified into four categories as follows:—

(i) *Prayers or Songs of Invocation*: These songs are generally sung before the commencement of any dancing or musical performance. They are composed mainly in praise of the local deities and spirits, the idea being that the deities or the spirits would be pleased with the party as well as with the community.

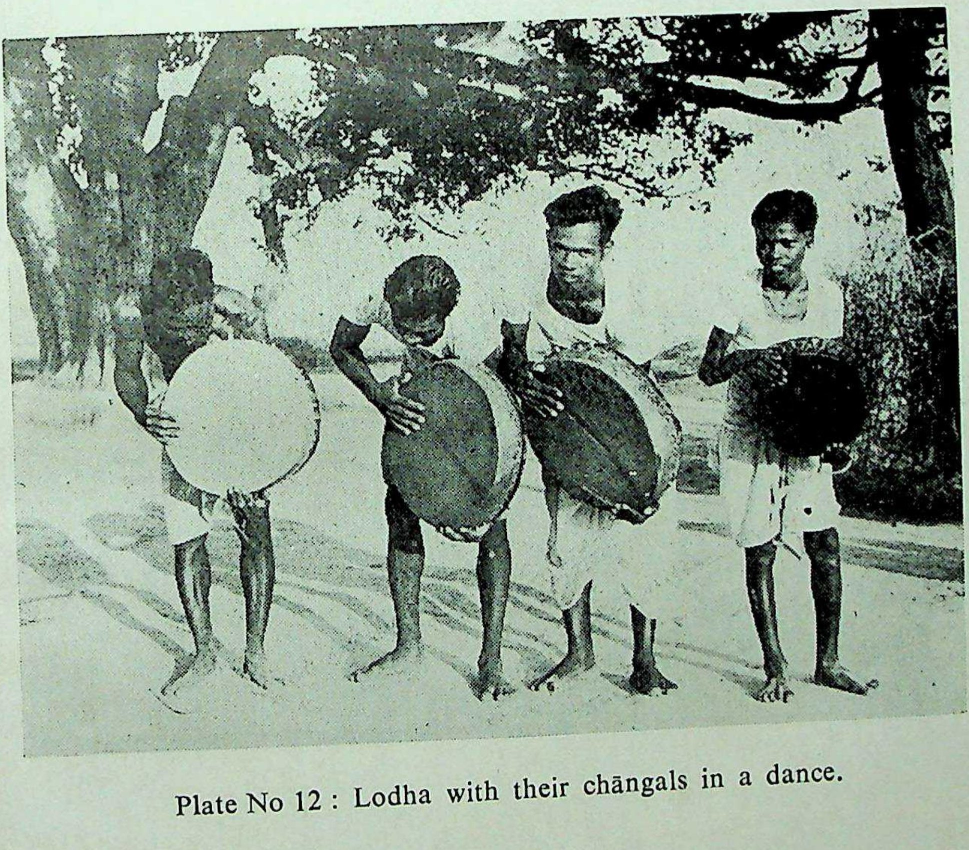

Plate No 12 : Lodha with their chāngals in a dance.

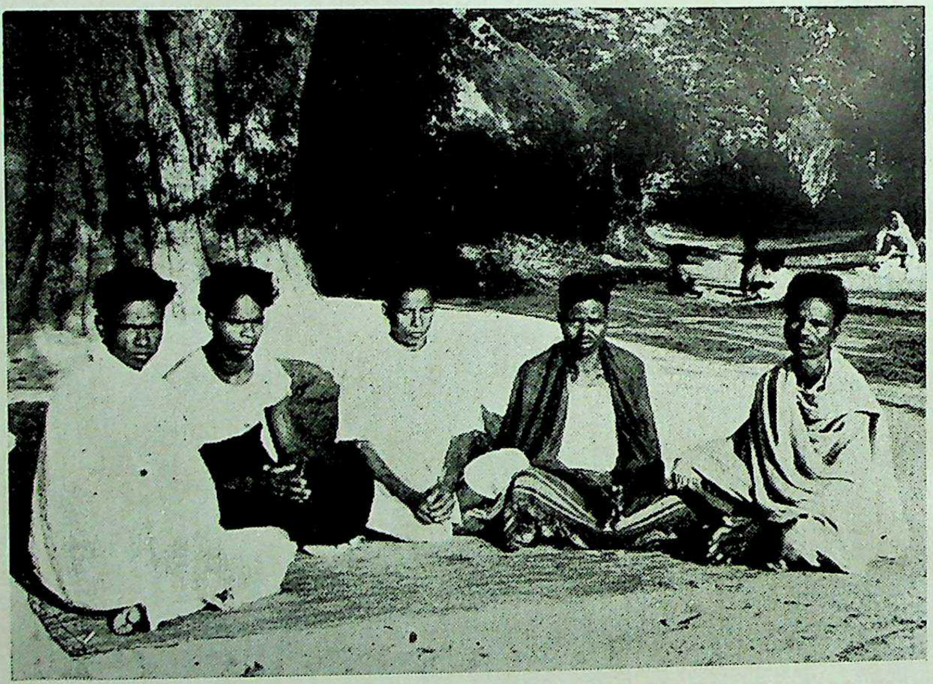

Plate No 13 : Village Panchayat in action.

Plate No 14 : Jiten—The medicine-man of Kukai with a patient.

Plate No 15 : Mother and child.

(ii) *Bāramāsi Songs or Songs of the Twelve-Month Cycle:* Bengal shows a varied picture of natural scenery during the twelve months of a Bengali year. It was a custom with the poets of older Bengal to point out the changes in feelings of their heroes and heroines in keeping with the changes in nature during these months. The heroes and heroines were generally personages from the *Purāṇas* and the epics like Ramchandra, Sita, Radha, Fullara and so on. Bāramāsi songs usually begin with a narration of the miserable lot of the hero or heroine and ends with a hope of better times.

(iii) *Jhumur Songs or Songs Sung During Stick Dance:* These are mainly in honour of Srikrishna, the mythological hero while he was engaged in pasturing his herd of cattle.

(iv) *Miscellaneous Songs*: Miscellaneous songs have been imitated from the Mahatos like the Bāndanā festival or welcoming of the cattle. Again there are several songs about jail life and *Shyāmā*—a deity like the Goddess *Kāli*, and so on.

Songs of Invocation

These constitute a number of songs sung to please the deities and spirits regarded either as benevolent or malevolent and indicate the measure of respect the Lodhas entertain for them.

'Let me pray Thee, Mother, let me pray Thee.
First let me pray Thee, first let me pray Thee!
Be thou victorious, Oh, Mother Sitalā!
Let me pray Thee, Oh, Mother!
Then let me pray 'Sitalā-Jugini,'
Then let me pray Thee the small-pox the maid,
Then let me pray Thee, the measles (Milmilā) Old Dame,
Then let me pray Thee, the Cholera Old Dame,
Then let me pray Thee, the *Chhāndan bāndan*
(a dangerous type of small-pox),
Then let me pray Thee, our Old Barām,

Then let me pray Thee, 'Beṛājal Maid,' (a local deity):
In south let me pray Thee, Oh! Jagannāth, Be Thou victorious,
Oh! Mother Mangalā! Be garbed Thou with sixteen varieties of dresses within sixteen hours, with the necklace of skulls;
In north let me pray Thee, Oh! Mother Kāli (the renowned Kāli of Kalighat, Calcutta),
Be Thou victorious!
In east let me pray Thee, Oh Sun! and Moon!
Be Thou victorious!
In Bhadreswar let me pray Thee, Oh! Mother Bhadrāni!
Be Thou victorious!
At Narayangarh, let me pray Thee, Oh! Mother Bramhāni!
Be Thou victorious!

No. 2: Prayers Addressed to Ganesh:

Ganesh, the god, is the son of *Durgā*. He is worshipped by Hindus.

'I bow to Thee, Oh! Lord Ganesh!
Ignorant as I am, I know not how to invoke Thee,
Thy worship precedes the worship of all other gods,
Oh! Lord Ganesh! Be Thou merciful and come to me for a time.
I am quite an ignorant man of no education,
How to worship your feet is not known to Padmanatha (The composer of the song).
Thou look only beautiful to me,
I bow to Thee, I worship Thee, Oh! Ganesh!
Four beautiful hands have Thou and bear a sacred thread
Of ten bits surrounding the body crossing over the shoulder.
How beautiful Thou look so adorned,
Thy face looks just like that of an elephant;
How could I give expression to its beauty?

Thy face seen, Thy body seen:
How beautiful to look at only beautiful, beautiful,
Oh! Ganesh!
The crown over Thy head is like a golden crest—
Says, Padmanatha, 'I bow to Thee again and again,
I tender my prayers to Thee!'

Bāramāsi Song

(i) *Bāramāsi of Lalita*: It is a Vaishnava ballad. Its name 'Lalita's Bāramāsi' is a misnomer. It should have been named 'Radha's Bāramāsi', the mythical heroine of the *Purānas*, who sings it after her Lord deserted her at Brindaban and went to Mathura to become a king there. Lalita, one of her maids only casually comes into the picture.

'Let me go to Mathura Oh my darling!
There in glory the buds of the plant *Mādhabi* blossom
Peeping in glee, Dear, though come late—
In this month of *Māgh* there must I be.
Darkness all around pierce the forest—
Who stole away, Lalita, my soul, my beloved?

In the month of *Phālgun* sorrows redouble
And the heart beats in agony;
Gobinda being absent from Golak now,
Who will bedeck the swing and grace the festival?
Who stole away, my soul, my love, O! Lalita!

In the month of *Chaitra* there in the temple of bower
The cruel 'cukoo' sings 'Ku-hoo', 'Ku-hoo', 'Ku-hoo'
The chord is touched as it all along reminds of a lost love
And my heart bursts forth in shock and woe
Who stole away, my soul, my love, O! Lalita!

In the month of *Vaisākh* scorching are the rays of the Sun
Which burns up the body in keen sensation;
But more one bears in the heated sigh
If the dearest husband leaves his home.
Who stole away, my soul, my love, O! Lalita!

In the month of *Jaistha* on water of the Jamuna
Banamali played and scattered handfuls of water
Over the body so black with frolicsome jests
My love would have done the same had he been here.
Who stole away, my soul, my love, O! Lalita!

In the month of *Āshāṛ* new clouds assemble
And cool the heated earth with thundering showers;
But the full bloom of my youth unheeded is
Gradually decaying in vain, Oh! darling
Who stole away, my soul, my love, O! Lalita!

In the month of *Srāvan* incessant rains pour in;
So heavy it is that, the hair can't be dry
And it feeds the thirsty earth to its fill;
But my sorrow knows no bounds, living far from him the lord of heart.
Who stole away, my soul, my love, Oh! Lalita!

In the month of *Bhādra* the river is full to its brim.
I, a poor woman, thus left alone
Know not, Oh! God! how to swim;
Who stole away, my soul, my love, Oh; Lalita;

In the month of *Āsvin* the worship of Ambikā is celebrated
In every home and makes all dance in glee,
But I, the unlucky, cry all day and night
Oh! my husband is far away from me
Who stole away, my soul, my love, Oh; Lalita;

In the month of *Kārtik*, Kāliā was trounced by Lord Hari
And all the snakes perished as a result;
That made all happy and free
And *Champaka* plants in glory peeped.
Who stole away, my soul, my love, Oh; Lalita;

In the month of *Māisore*, wintery cold is born
And the body always quivers,
But even so, my bed-sheet gets wet with tears
And night passes in flowing tears untame.
Who stole away my soul, my love, Oh; Lalita;

In the month of *Paush*, was sent a letter
There to the abode of Panchananda,
This month would pass with hopes better
And *Māgh* must bring him back, my heart to soothe.
Who stole away, my soul, my love. Oh! Lalita!

(Panchananda was probably the composer of this song).

Bāramāsi of Rama

Rama the hero of the *Ramayana* went to exile in the era of Tretā where from his forest abode, his beloved wife Sita was carried away by Ravana the King of the Rākshasas of Lanka. Later, with the help of some Vanara (monkey) friends, a large contingent of such army and also that of Bivisana, the younger brother of King Ravana, Rama and his younger brother Laksman rescued Sita from Lanka. Here the sequences of twelve months affecting the thoughts and actions of Rama are described in a verse.

'Seven or five mates together sitting in a solitude
Oh! Rama! sitting in a solitude,
Gently speak about Sita's sufferings.

In the first of *Chaitra*, Rama entered the forest.
Oh! Rama! entered the forest,
Clotted hair on the head, in the garb of a mendicant,
Laksman brought some flowers and fruits
And Rama distributed these to all.

In the month of *Vaisākh*, it came with burning fire,
Oh! Rama! with burning fire.
His lotus-like feet burnt while he walked
And over his head was no cover,

In *Jaistha* distresses too many
Thou hast suffered in the wilderness,
Oh! Rama! suffered in the wilderness,
So many they are indeed
That human hearts cannot bear them,

Āshār came—the time of rains,
Oh! Rama! the time of rains:
A couple of birds blazed their flutes
And clouds in the sky poured in rains,
Oh! Rama! poured in rains:
And Rama took shelter beneath a tree.

And *Srāvan*, Lakshman built a hut,
Oh! Rama! built a hut.
Rama and Sita lived in it and Laksman outside,
Seeing Laksman suffer, Rama burst into tears.
He rose up gently in search of a cave
And entered the wilderness dense.
In *Bhādra* the Sun's rays being too hot to bear lying at home—
Ah! Rama! lying at home!
Rama from the wood, returned tired to his hut,
With a wooden load kept on head
Exhausted in the Sun, getting the head so covered.

In *Āsvin*, Ambika Puja is celebrated in these three worlds,
He made preliminary worship in the wood dense,
In his devoted heart with sunned rice and plantains.
Worshipped the daughter of the Sun Family.

In *Kārtik* leaving this hut in wood
To another forest he repaired,
Ah ! Rama ! to another forest he repaired
Having no fruits to eat throughout the day
And in the evening they got a few perchance,
Rama and Sita ate but Laksman did fast,
And from that day on Rama took no food.

In *Agrahāyan* he built his hut there,
Ah! Rama! built his hut there!
For new rice, our Lord had a desire.

In *Paush*, violent cold brought in the despair
approaching fast ;
Ah! Rama! despair approaching fast,
Oh! Lord! wind blew from the Himalayas vast
(Wherever Thou goest) Either Kasi or Gaya or Brindaban,
Ah! at Brindaban,
The virtue of the holy places all
Lies at your door, that is *tulasi*.

In *Māgh* the Makar Jatra festivity held
On the fifth lunar day,
Ah! Rama! the fifth lunar day,
Worshipped he, heart and soul
The goddess Sarasvati.

In *Phālgun*, the sorrows of parting
Are too hard to bear at home, too hard to bear !
Sorrowful twelve months about Sita
To whom could we narrate ?

Bāramāsī (*Ten months*) *of Sita*

Sita, the wife of Rama having been carried away by Ravana the King of Lanka was kept in the forest of Asoka. She was there for ten months after which Ramachandra killed Ravana and rescued Sita.

It is the mohth of *Māgh*
Penetrating the bed of the *Kusha* grass
Mādhabis have sprung up in thousands to blossom in the
Spring ;
Oh! my heart aches with pain,
How bitterly inconsolable it is to remain desolate and
forlorn now!
Oh! Sita how deeply you lament for Rama!

The blackbird sings bitterly in *Phālgun*,
Alas Rama! may victory and glory be thine!
Oh! she remembers Rama alone in the forest
And undergoes such trouble at last:
Oh! Sita! how deeply you lament for Rama!

In *Chaitra*, the skylark is thirsty
Oh! let us see it,
Had I but died after birth no sorrows could have touched me;
But now, only worries and distresses and afflictions to bear and no think.
Oh! Sita! how deeply you lament for Rama!

The sun-rays feel hot by degress in *Vaisākh*,
Sita's heart is drying up with it;
Rama in his ceaseless eforts in the forest—
Searches for his beloved Sita; careless of sun.
Oh! Sita! how deeply you lament for Rama!

In the month of *Jaistha*
Summer fruits are on the tree,
Where are you now, Oh! here
Would I have fed thee.
Oh! Sita! how deeply you lament for Rama!

In the month of *Āshaṛ*
Pomp and granduer in the sky
Remembrance of the beloved
In the maidens' bosoms, makes them gloomy and sigh
Oh! the past sweet recollection of thee
Only aches my heart and is a pain to me.
Oh! Sita! how deeply you lament for Rama!

The sky is overcast in the month of Srāvan,
There is a downpour now and then and the sun is gone,
I am bereaved, helpless and cruelly shunned,
My heart sinks down, Oh! sorrowful desolation!
Oh! Sita! how deeply you lament for Rama!

The palm-fruit is ripe in *Bhādra*
But my beloved is deprived of it.
Had he been here by my side
I would have served him with these on the golden plate.
Oh! Sita! how deeply you lament for Rama!

It is the eighth day of the month of *Āsvin*,
Rama worships Parvati, after bridging the ocean,
He is preparing to kill cruel Ravana
And make Bibhisan the King instead.
Oh! Sita! how deeply you lament for Rama!.

In the month of *Kārtik* war drums are beating
And Rama and Ravana are ready for war ensuing,
Sita has thus passed her ten months in exile
Bikrama the devotee in sorrows describes it thus.
Oh! Sita! how deeply you lament for Rama!'

(Probably Bikram Das was the author of this song as is indicated in the last line).

Bāramāsi of Nāthu

'My beloved has gone away to a foreign land—
And has left me forlorn and desolate;
In the month of *Vaisākh* I feel the approach of inciting spring,
Alas! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl,
How could I remain here alone?

In *Jaistha* my beloved called me. O! Darling Radhika;
While our yacht spread its sails on the waters of Jamuna—
And now and then he would make me weep
Holding fast my garment's hem.
Alas! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.

In *Āshaṛ* the river is full to the brim,
And lotuses dance on the surface of it,
If he were a fruit, I would pluck him home—
With the ease with which we do it oft.
Alas! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.

It rains so heavily in *Srāvan*—
The month which separated the two—Rama and Sita,
And now for me—whose cruel hands
Have taken away my beloved from me ?
Alas ! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.

In *Bhādra*, my eyes poured down in torrents
all the accumulated griefs,
Carrying me away on the surging waves,
Being as I am a lovely dame,
How could I remain here desolate and forlorn ?
Alas ! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.

In *Āsvin*, my beloved remains in a distant land—
How should an innocent girl like me, stay here alone ?
Alas ! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.

In *Kārtik*, everyone longs for the love of her beloved—
But Krishna has left me here cruelly,
How could I live here alone
With beauty uncaressed and unrewarded ?
Alas ! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.

In *Agrahāyan*, everyone is happy with new crops,
And the fondling of the darlings is done in every home,
But how could I do so, having sown only yesterday.
Observing the celebration in the formal way,
Alas ! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.

In *Paush*, all are happy barring me,
For fate has played me down with unkind jest ;
And held my darling away in a distant land :
Alas ! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.
In *Māgh*. the spring was coming round—
But it brought for me no news of him,
Oh ! I am disillusioned now—
He will never return !
Alas ! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.

In *Phālgun* he took from my hands betel leaves and nuts—
And called me 'darling Radha'
He has left this couch now—
Whom I will bring in here ?
Alas ! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.

In *Chaitra*, there are gay fairs all around,
I am sure he will not return home
Alas ! at this hour he has left me—an innocent girl.

A Young Bride's Bāramāsi

This particular song depicts the experiences of conjugal life of a girl married at the age of twelve by way of reminiscence.

'O ! sweet dame ! when first you came.
At twelve full—
So slim was thy loin
And movements sweet:
An image of love divine !
O charming dame ! twelve uncrossed—
Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

O ! sweet dame !
A couple of years had passed by now—
Since you wore the bridal dress:
And how strange it looked !
When thy delicate hands
Furrowed and fenced the land
And sown *Puis* with grace !
And thy mild warning not to chew its stumps—
To save my taste ; all were sweet—
O charming dame! twelve uncrossed—
Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

Barely it is the third year—
And you look so wise!
How to spend, you give advice.
And remind me every now and then—

To scorn your counsel is no gain;
And contend that a lady won
By marriage is not one's flesh or bone;
And they are all sweet words of caution—
O charming dame! twelve uncrossed—
Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

And now full four years are rolling by—
And you look like a tank;
With its flights of steps—
Merged into crystal water on either side:
And in the dream you awake—
And wonder at your own blooming youth
But I have spied it—
A divine thing to embrace
O charming dame! twelve uncrossed—
Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

Now crept the fifth year
In silent steps—
And you far exceed in your grace.
And I felt the qualms, I can't afford
To provide for thy rest, a bed of rose
So made I a finest piece of mat
With the core of bamboos, softened and cut—
And I know, it hardly suits a bride
All divine in flesh and in pride:
O charming dame! hardly twelve crossed—
Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

And for the fleeting past, we shed no tears—
Came the sixth, an added year.
And I saw you darling, stealing for a bath
To the streamlet nigh, through the zig-zag path;
With the gait of a roe which knows no care
Bust wrapped in a scarlet nap and the shoulders bare
O charming dame! twelve uncrossed—
Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

The flight of days struck the seventh year—
Now your blooming grace is beyond compare
In day's toils you take so pride—
And do the chores and duties abide:

And I felt it more than my share of love
When one day fifty dishes of curry and rice you served:
O charming dame! twelve uncrossed—
Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

Then came the eighth year, a year of rest—
With smiles and joy, you looked your best.
And I won't grudge those actions now—
Though at times you relax and prow
Upon my movements and watch me off—
And play the chess with your lover and scoff;
O charming dame! twelve uncrossed—
Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

The year ninth followed in close heels—
You were seen too busy with the threads and reels!
And you set your hands in weaving cloth—
Chequered and wavy and of all sorts!
And why? O dear! such haste to do?

Oh! drape you that to meet your beau!
Nay, to submit to your husband's embrace
All your beauty and all your grace'.
O charming dame! twelve uncrossed—
Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

Still the year stole silently to ten—
Through spring, summer, winter and rain!
And now you look to purpose set—
And bid your husband 'broomstick get'!
And do thy job, to rest thy limbs—
O dear! I agree, don't be grim:
O charming dame! twelve uncrossed—
Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

Now sailed in the eleventh year—
    And we have lived the life without tears,
And you fancy took and told me plain—
    'Put up a place on this glen'
For happy we must, as ever we did;
    No qualms be left, no craze or greed
    O charming dame! twelve uncrossed—
    Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.

And now has come the twelvth at last!
    A content life of a decade is past—
And now your actions all embrace
    From pantry doors to the stormy waves!

And what a fun for you to ask
    Let's go yatching and by it bask!
    O charming dame! twelve uncrossed-
    Pardon my extollation, if it is gross.'

This is not a Bāramāsi song in the truest sense of the term, as it narrates the events of twelve years of a young bride's life. Still it goes by the name of Bāramāsi.

There are several Bāramāsi songs of the above type current among them, the burden of most of which being mental reactions consequent upon separation of a loving couple.

Jhumur Song

These are the songs of the Vaishnavas relating to the exploits of Krishna in his boyhood. These songs are not sung to the accompaniment of *Chāngal.* A group of boys under an aged leader sing such songs after the festival of Durgā worship in which a single *Mādal* is played on for accompaniment. The party consists only of boys, each having two bamboo sticks. During music they strike these together at regular intervals.

'Gopal (Krishna) got up from bed early in the morning
    and went to play—
He became disappointed there and went to his mother.

After returning from the play-ground he asked his mother for food.
But as she was busy with the household work she could not attend to him in time.
Alas! what would I take mother? What would I take?
I want that butter and thickened milk.
I have kept for you (son) the sweet thickened milk.
In darkness how was he aware of the butter?
He took the butter from the pot by means of his bamboo flute.
Then Nandarani came behind with a stick in hand,
Krishna fled and jumped upon a Kadamba tree,
He climbed upon a dry branch and began to smile,
O! my dear boy! come down or I will weep—
The dry and delicate branch may break at once.
I shall not beat you but give you some flowers,
O! Gopal! come down at once, I will pluck flowers for you.
Don't go far away, O! Gopal! risking your limbs and killing me thus—
She wept looking at the way-side flowers!
I just came back from door to door calling aloud the name of Gopal
Please say where our Gopal stays—in this house or that,
He is not our Gopal, but the Lord of the Universe
O! Mother! just throw away your stick, Nilmani (Gopal) will come back.'

This song was collected from village Parulda.

Miscellaneous Songs

Besides the usual songs prevalent among the Lodhas, the younger folk often sing popular film songs not according to their proper rhythm. Some of them also sing other songs known as 'Shyama Sangit.' These songs are very popular in Bengal. One typical 'Shyama Sangit' (which is a distorted one) is translated below:—

'O! Mother Shyama! who has laid flowers at thy feet?
Shreds of red *Jabās* round thy *Nupur*-bedecked feet?
I'll serve the Mother with milk, unboiled rice, *Tulasi* leaves and incense:
Tell me Mother! who has offered thee flowers?
Crows are cawing '*Kā Kā*'; Behula's mother has gone away
What would be the fate of Behula now?
Tell me Mother! who has offered Thee flowers?
Small fruits are borne by small trees

And the big ones bear big fruits—
There are only Baels (a kind of fruit) in a Bael tree:
Tell me Mother! who has offered Thee flowers?'

This song is heard at Kukai. According to one Madhab Digar it is the song of the Chirmars of Midnapur. Once a Chirmar came to this village for hunting games and stayed there for sometime. Madhab collected this song from him through personal contact.

Songs of the Bāndanā or Cattle-Caressing Festival

Bāndanā or the cattle-caressing festival of the Mahatos and the Koras is celebrated just after the worship of goddess Kali and ranks second in popularity amongst the Lodhas. Details of this festival have been given in an earlier chapter.

The songs have three difereent aspects according to the different phases of the festival which lasts for three days. On the new-moon day the menfolk rise very early and light some lamps and sing these songs to the accompaniment of *Mādals*. These are called the 'Songs of Awakening.'

O! brother! awakes Mother Lakshmi!
Awakes Mother Bhagabati!

O! awakes the night of the new-moon—
And the first full-moon day:
Our Mother! Goddess.
O! brother! a single blessing will give you ten cows and five sons,
And wealth abundant;
And by the next blessing you will have ten brothers sure!
It is through thy grace O! Father!
We are blessed with fortune
And plenty of milk and rice—
We enjoy the most.

II. O! what strange flower hath woven thy cloth !
What again, provideth thy meal?
And what flower lendeth lustre to a maiden's *coiffeur*;
And sustaineth creation, what flower divine?

III. O! woven into apparel—are the blossoms of the cotton;
And the flowers of the paddy provide us with food;
And sesamum and mustard to the *coiffeur* splendour impart;
And marks of vermilion bear the world at large.

IV. Oh! where are thy parents and thy brothers?
And when, Oh! when, will commence the Bāndanā festival?
When at every home will be worshipped goddess Bhagabati?

V. Oh! brother, thy parents are beyond the mighty Ganges;
And thy brothers are across its narrow stream;
And the Bāndanā festival is high on the hills:
So at every home will be worshipped goddess Bhagabati!

VI. Oh! brother, how would you bring your parents back?—
And your brothers too?
And how would you bring Bāndanā Parab (festival)?
So that at every home will be worshipped goddess Bhagabati!

VII. Oh! brother I will bring my parents on horse-back,
And bring my brother on the back of an elephant;
Also bring the Bāndanā Parab (Festival) by beating of drums—
So that Goddess Bhagabati might be worshipped at every home.'

Bāndanā songs are performed through dances generally on the third day or the last day of the festival. Some bulls trained to trot for a while, are also brought in to perform a sort of dance on a fallow land with the rhythmic beating of drums.

Songs of Dancing

I. 'Oh! brother, who hath made the tinkling bell (*tharkā*) out of the wood?
And this silken thread of deep-green twigs?
Oh! must I tether the cow and the calf with rope so strong?
Fitting the name of the grazier.

II. But perhaps Oh! brother, you know not just—
Who made this rope and the sturdy peg;
And who, those two brothers beating drums—
Led the cow in a dancing gait?

III. Yes, I know it, God has made the rope and the peg;
And God Mahadeva has driven it in;
And Ram and Lakshman brothers two,
Beat the drums, and make the cow dance.'

Songs of Tusu Festival

I. 'A house I have built on the verge of the road—
And set up windows all around;
And some day will come here the *Dārogā* of Midnapur:
And stay awhile and smoke the pipe.

II. O, Tusu, the month of *Paush* has come—
And the king will demand his tribute.
Now, *Tusu*, you will have to meet his dues,
By selling at least your ornaments.

III. Like two earthen pots—hung in a single sling—
Which clatter and fret :
A man who tends two wives—
To burstling brawls his partners sets.

There are many Tusu songs prevalent in this region, Some of the songs reflect various socio economic conditions of the locality.

One peculiar song about the jail life has been composed by an unknown village poet. This song was collected from the Lodhas of village Metial in Narayangarh.

'Know not ! what God of Fate, had played the game unkind !
They thought me a rogue, a simple folk—
And sent to the Court, hands bound.
Who can avoid the will of Destiny ?
No man, great or tiny !
Alas ! my luck !
I was caught as a duck—
And put in a cell
Without a bail.
And I feel so lone—
And curse my luck alone !
From now shall I get—
Half-a-plate,
And starve to the bone—
Like a beetle drone.
What a prospect bleak—
It's all jail trick!
I pray thee! Guard so kind!
Set me free, for home I always pine.

My petition did fail—
The Officer at cell,
He endorsed long term—
His boss made it firm ;
They supplied the kits—
The convict's slacks and tit-bits.
And to my comrades when I ask the cause
They bide me work without respite or pause;
Nonsense! they said, the jail is so vile!
Toil, one must toil, not rest awhile.'

Folk Tales

Folk tales are told by old men to younger generations at their leisure time or at night when they assemble together. Some such folk tales are given below.

No. 1: The sun and the moon are two sisters and the two generally stay aside. They have a large number of children. The stars and other heavenly bodies that appear at night are the children of the moon. The moon is the younger of the two. She desired to have a few more children. Fearing lack of space in the sky for her new children, she thought of killing those of the sun without offending her. Hence, she devised a scheme and told the sun, 'O sister! let us eat up some of our children as they are too many in number and impose on us a heavy strain in looking after them all. It would be better if we devour all of them and thus relieve us of this burden.' According to her plan she hid her children and told her sister next day that she had eaten up all of them. The sun took it to be true and began to devour all her children. When they were all eaten up, the moon appeared with her children in the sky. What followed was a terrific quarrel between the two, and the sun decided never again to see her sister's face. Since that day the sun rises during day-time and the moon at night.

No. 2 : Originally the sky was not as high as it is today. In ancient times it almost touched the ground. Once a couple were husking some grains in their courtyard. As usual, the sky touched their heads and made it difficult for them to go on with their work. They therefore struck the sky with a burning piece of wood. Thus struck, the sky withdrew to a great height for fear of being burnt. Since that day the sky has remained as high as ever.

No. 3 : In the days of yore there were several Brahmans in a village. They used to worship god Shiva regularly with *tulasi* leaves. Among them was a pious Brahman. One day, he plucked some *tulasi* leaves and kept them upon a broad plantain leaf. Quite innocent of the nature of things, his baby polluted these leaves by passing urine on them. The Brahman was not aware of this. With his natural piety the Brahman went to the temple and worshipped god Shiva with these leaves with great devotion. In course of time he accumulated a good fortune. Other Brahmans saw this and when their terms came, they wilfully got the *tulasi* leaves to be offered to God Shiva mixed up with the urine of their babies so that they too might acquire fortune like the pious Brahman. When he came to know all these, the pious Brahman protested against this profanity and left the village to settle on the other bank of the river. By this time all the huts of the Brahmans responsible for this sacrilege blazed with fire. Then the Brahmans realising their immense folly, went to bring back the pious Brahman to please god Shiva. They tried to cross the river by swimming. As they jumped into the water all of them were turned into frogs with long thread-like marks upon their bodies. These represent the sacred threads of the Brahmans. All the frogs are the descendants of these Brahmans.

The recreational life of the Lodhas reveals different traits of acculturation. The various games played by the Lodha children are much the same as the local games and riddles which show a close inter-relation between them although these are of recent origin. The most popular games are

Hā-du-du and football which are played in a wide field, and a few young Lodhas like Gopal, Ram and Nirapada have distinguished themselves in these games. They have their own team at Kukai. This team participated in many competitive matches in the neighbourhood. This indicates a gradual tendency of developing inter-communal relationship which, in its process, is loosening the tribal solidarity and exclusiveness.

In respect of songs sung by the Lodhas, the invoking song may be said as typically their own. This kind of song is sung at the very beginning of any musical performance. In this song the territorial deities of the locality as well as those of Brahmanical tradition are praised and their blessings are invoked before the celebrations, as they dare not neglect the latter specially in times of distress and difficulty. All these songs are composed in corrupt Bengali, intermixed with some tribal or Oriya words. *Bāramāsi* songs have their theme mainly derived from the Vaishnava traditions which depict with great devotion the various stories about Krishna and Radhika. Two *Bāramāsi* songs have drawn their themes from the *Ramayana*. Thus it is clear that religious ideas of the Hindus have already begun to influence them through these oral epic literatures which have an all-India appeal and distribution, Again, it has been pointed out elsewhere in this monograph that Lodhas came in contact with the Vaishnavas more closely than the other religious sects. Specially in Midnapur, Vaishnavism, which does not accept the supremacy of the Brahmans in religious or spiritual matters, was very popular a few centuries ago and one Rasikananda, a famous preacher of this religion, was born at Rohini in Sankrail Police Station close to the Lodha territory. Sri Chaitanya who propagated the cult of Vaishnavism probably traversed through this district on his way to Puri from Nadia, and while preaching his newly founded religion probably had influenced a major section of the non-Brahmanical population to accept his new unorthodox ideas and philosophy. Thus it seems quite possible that the Lodhas have also been influenced by this popular Vaishnavism as they had been oppressed and hated for a long time as untouchables.

It is also interesting to note why the Lodhas alone have adopted *Bāramāsi* songs as their communal songs. These *Bāramāsi* songs flourished in Bengali literature during the 15th to 17th century. It may be said that probably the Lodhas came in close contact with the Vaishnava minstrels who composed such songs and carried them far into the rural areas to bring the great message of love and tolerance at every door of the villages and were influenced by their immediate appeal and accepted Vaishnavism as a popular creed along with this particular type of oral literature. The language of the *Bāramāsi* songs as prevails among the Lodhas shows that they might have been composed about the later half of the 17th century when the Vaishnava faith had taken a deep root among them. A new wave of anti-Vaishnavism swept this country later on and some of the economically better-off people might have then changed their religion as a measure of convenience to secure a higher social status in the new social set up. But the Lodhas being both educationally and economically backward, did not understand the significance of such changes and held on to their own. Thus they became separated from the rest of the changed Hindu world and the ideas with their spontaneous anti-Brahmanical feelings of a tribal origin. Gradually with the passage of time, these songs of the Vaishnava minstrels became part and parcel of the religious life of the Lodhas and the people could not progress well for a long time, steeped as they were in the Vaishnavite ideas which lacked the power of giving a proper lead and inspire them to a way of organised thinking of a higher philosophical order, which the other progressive communities had much in them. As a result we could not find a new poet of their own to add more songs to the existing stock as stated earlier. It may be said here that inter-communal relationship was completely lost at that time and the people began to disintegrate from a compact society individually, family-wise and communally. Thus their recreational activities and ideas also lay stagnant along with other social progress for a few centuries as the cult of individualism was unknown to them nor was any attempt made to convince them of its benefits. Only in recent times, with the abolition of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952, they have been given by the Government some facilities to build up a better life.[1] Due to their coming again into close contact with the most advanced neighbouring people of the various castes and communities and enjoying modern amenities to some extent, there has also been a change in the patterns of the Bāramāsi songs which have been replaced by *Jātrā*, Film, *Bhoodān* and National songs in some isolated parts of the district inhabited by them.

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[1] See Appendix, Upliftment Programmes: Present and Future.

CHAPTER X

CRIME AND CRIMINALS

History of the Criminal Tribes Act

The Criminal Tribes Act was passed by the British Government of India as early as 1871 and applied against some of the aboriginal tribes of certain special communities of British India. This Law empowered the local Governments to define any community or tribe or any part of a tribe, gang or class indulging in systematic commission of non-bailable offences as a 'Criminal Tribe. Various amendments were made in this Act in course of time. In 1876, its application was extended to lower Bengal. An amendment of the Act was made in 1897 in which enhanced penalties for repetition of offences and breaches of laws were provided for. In 1911 further amendments were made which provided for maintenance of a Register of persons considered criminals for detailed information of their whereabouts. Registered members of the communities who came under this Act were compelled to give finger prints and to report changes of their residences to the Police even if it was just for one night. Members of such tribes had to suffer punishments for alleged crimes even on suspicion. By a further amendment it was applied to the whole of British India in 1924. An individual of any community who was considered to be a habitual criminal or who committed systematic crimes came under the purview of the Criminal Tribes Act for constant surveillance. Eventually in 1952, this law was repealed.

In India the peculiar caste system or occupational guild system is perhaps responsible for the creation of the maxim 'Once a criminal, always a criminal' ; that race or tribe or generation of people whose ancestors took to crime as a means of livelihood, must be criminals as well. Or it might be that, as it happened in many places, a few people organised gangs and created serious troubles to thwart the attempts of the British Government to subjugate them and in the process they developed criminal habits.

Criminal Tribes and the Lodhas

The total population of the Criminal Tribes in India had been reckoned as four millions, distributed in almost all the constituent States. Mr. Haikerwall[15] gave a detailed description and distribution of all the criminal tribes and castes in India. But he did not mention the Lodhas in his report. He says that almost all the criminal tribes have very primitive style of living, some of them still remaining in the 'food gathering' or 'hunting' stage or 'pastoral' state.

A good number of systematic, major and organised crimes like dacoity, robbery, burglary, theft, arson, etc. were committed by many of the Lodhas in the district of Midnapur around 1900. Many of them were sent up for trial on specific charges at different times and were convicted. One Gang Case (U/S 400 of Indian Penal Code) was started in 1904 in connection with which a large number of active Lodha criminals were sent to jail and some of them were put under surveillance.

Consequently the Lodhas were declared a criminal tribe in 1916 under Government Notification No. 7022-23 dated 20th May, 1916, Calcutta. Gradually the provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act were made applicable in their case and various penal measures were taken from time to time to curb their criminal activities. A crime register of the Lodhas was opened on the 8th September 1916, in which the names of the persons committing systematic crimes were entered and they were treated according to the provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act. Later, another Notification was issued by the Government (Memo No. 1560-61, dated the 16th March, 1928) about the Lodhas which laid down that any Lodha, on his first conviction under non-bailable offences and under Section 109/110 of the Criminal Procedure Code, should be treated as a registered member under the Criminal Tribes Act. There were also non-Lodha persons registered under the Criminal Tribes Act in this district. Before the revocation of this Act, the total number of the members registered under the C. T. Act in this district was 1,600 of which 591 were Lodhas, i. e. 30% of the total adult male Lodhas[16] were thought to be habitual criminals.

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[15] Haikerwal, B.S.: *Economic and Social Aspects of Crimes in India*, London, 1934.

Nature of Crimes

Major crimes in the district may be classified as—

(i) Murder (U / Ss 302-304 I. P. C),
(ii) Dacoity (U/Ss 395-397 I. P. C),
(iii) Robbery (U/Ss 392-394 I. P. C.),
(iv) Burglary (U/Ss $\frac{457\text{-}459}{379\text{-}380}$ I. P. C.),
(v) Theft (U/Ss, 379, 380, 761 I. P. C.),
(vi) and a few others like Arson U/Ss 435, 436 I. P. C.), etc. etc.

Table 27 shows the recorded number of major crimes committed in the district during the year 1953, as well as the total number of crimes in which the Lodhas are involved.

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[16] Gupta, R. K.: "Work Among the Lodhas," *Calcutta Police Journal*, Vol. II, No. 2, 1954.

TABLE 27

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF MAJOR CRIMES OF THE DISTRICT (1953) AND THE LODHAS

Serial No.	Nature of crime	Reported cases	True cases		Percentage
			Total	Lodha concerned	
1	Murder	86	72	—	—
2	Dacoity	110	108	6	5·55
3	Robbery	123	107	—	—
4	Burglary	1516	1486	127	8·54
5	Theft	1715	1583	111	7·01

Dacoity is a serious type of crime in which an organised attempt is made to forcibly occupy the movable properties of others, sometimes resulting in murders of those resisting such attempts. A few Lodha informants said that the dacoits used different types of sharp weapons and assaulted brutally the inmates of the house they raided to extract information about cash, ornaments and other valuables. In many cases they had to use husking levers (*Dhenki*) to break open the doors. However, a typical description in which the misdoings of Lodha dacoits have been recorded by Mr. Drake Bockman during his judgement in a Lodha docoity case in 1905 is given below:—

'From the evidence of the approvers, some of whom have already been convicted of dacoity and of the victims whose property has been looted, it is found that they attacked in bands of 60/70 each. They carried with them lateritic stones ...Houses attacked were cleared of all property, the inmates at times receiving injuries, and in two cases the injuries resulted in death. Often more than one house was attacked ...Everything available, including jwellery, articles of food, clothing, cash, utensils, etc. were carried off. The cash was spent, the food consumed, sometimes on the spot......The *modus operandi* of the dacoits was in all cases similar; while

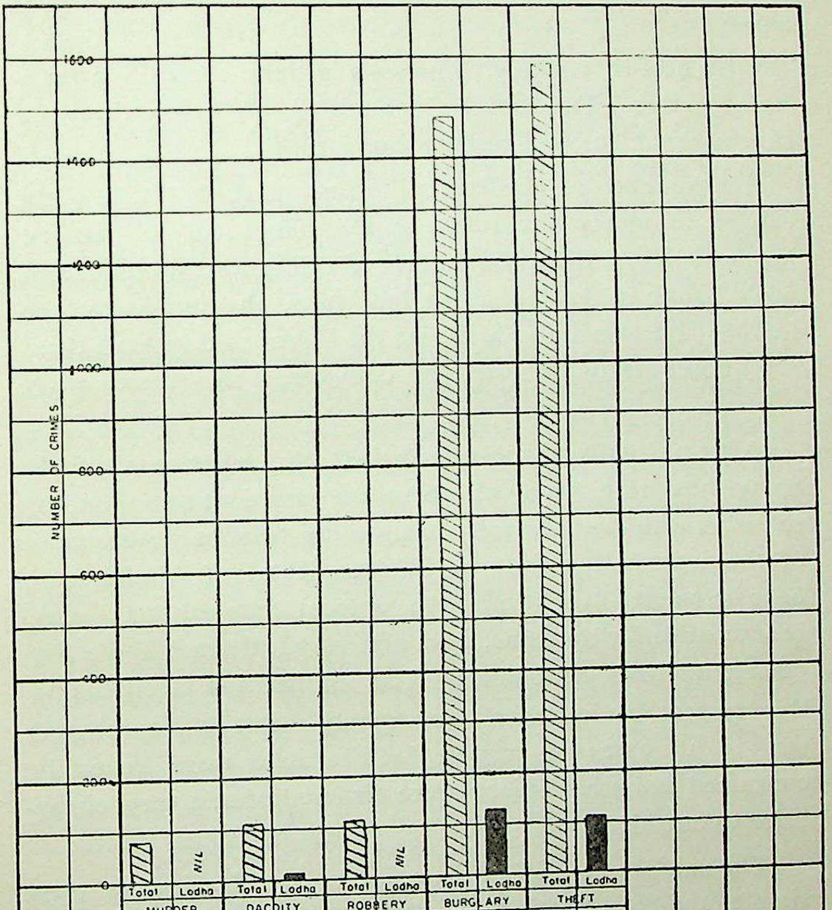

Fig. 5. Crimes in Midnapur, 1953

a few men armed with swords, *lāthis* and axes (*tāngi*) ransacked the premises and were stripping women of their ornaments, a number remained outside and kept at bay all who attempted to approach, by flinging stones with which they had previously provided themselves. The straw of the thatch was pulled down and lighted to aid in the process of discovery.'

In a case of robbery, 4 persons or less generally participate together. This may be committed on a high way or in a market place or a residence or a shop.

In the case of burglary, pilfering and theft, people go in batches or singly according to the risk involved. In the jungle areas of Jhargram reports of lifting fowl or goat from one's house or taking away fuel from the jungle by the Lodhas are generally made to the Police and most of them are subsequently arrested or convicted for these petty offences.

After a dacoity or robbery or theft, etc. when a valuable booty has been gathered, these are passed on to a group of receivers who are generally well-to-do persons. According to the information given by Bhuban Kotal of Ma-Manasa, once he handed over jwellery to a local monyed man who, in exchange for the same, gave him very little cash and a few pounds of rice several times. The information available in this respect is, however, very scanty. But it may be said that in all cases of crimes, food articles were generally consumed and other objects were disposed of at a very cheap price to outsiders.

The *modus operandi* of the crime of the Lodhas is very simple and primitive in nature and is committed without any preconceived plan except in the case of a few habitual criminals of the tribe who do everything in a planned manner. These crimes are prompted by the necessity of the moment. When Lodhas are found to commit a crime in league with another group of criminals, sometimes in a mixed gang, there is a better planning.

Organised Crimes and Lodha Gangs

Organised crime in a gang is not limited to the Lodhas. A gang is organised when a few veteran criminals assemble, plan, work jointly and distribute booties among themselves. The gang is generally named after the leader of the gang or the name of the village where a majority of the participant criminals live. For the Police Administration purposes, a gang register is opened and the systematic activities of the gang members are recorded. A gang may have a wide jurisdiction covering a few Police Stations or sometimes extending in other districts also. To continue their criminal activities, new members technically known as 'additional members' are often recruited for the gang by its leader and thus they become a part and parcel of the gang. At the same time, a few members may the untraced or removed from the group due to death or for other causes. But it is interesting to note here that though a gang consists of so many members, yet the distribution of the booty is made only among those who actually participate in raids.

In the district of Midnapur there are altogether 26 active gangs, of which the Lodhas have organised 2 big gangs only. One of these is the 'Doma Lodha Gang' and the other 'Bhalkisol Gang'. A few Lodhas like Kisto Mallik and Nanku Paramanik of Saldanga and Kailas Mallik and Hansa Bhakta of Kadamdiha are also included in the main 'Sabar Gang' of a mixed type. The details of these two Lodha Gangs are given in Table 28.

Doma Lodha Gang

This gang was first detected in 1904 when the leader Doma Lodha of Kerasole-Nimdiha under the Police Station of Jhargram was suspected by the Police to be involved in many major crimes committed in the adjoining areas. This gang has a wide area of operation covering the Police Stations of Jhargram, Gopiballavpur, Khargpur suburbs and Dantan. Upto the end of the year 1953, this gang committed altogether 21 dacoities, 4 robberies, 27 burglaries, 23 thefts and 2 arsons and the number of convictions therefore were 5 for dacoity, 1 for robbery, 5 for burglary, 7 for theft and 17 under Bad

TABLE 28

CHARACTERISTICS OF LODHA GANGS UPTO 31ST DECEMBER 1953.

		Name of the Gang	
		(1) Doma Lodha	(2) Bhalkisol
Year of Registration		1904	1916
Total number of persons registered		75	137
Number of non-Lodha persons		9	26
Total number of active criminals		45	107
Number of members who are in jail		2	1
Number of members who are untraced		9	6
Number of reported offences committed	Murder	—	—
	Dacoity	21	77
	Robbery	4	18
	Burglary	27	16
	Theft	23	14
	Arson	2	—
Number of cases in which convicted	Murder	—	—
	Dacoity	5	14
	Robbery	1	4
	Burglary	5	9
	Theft	7	13
	Cr. P.C. 110, 109(b)	4	3
	C. T. Act 22/2(b)	9	17
	Others	4	17

livelihood Case[1], C. T. Act (U/S 22/2 (b)), etc. The leader Doma had been shown in the Police records to have committed 45 cases of criminal offences (even before forming the gang) and had been convicted 22 times on specific charges. This gang committed maximum number of crimes in the years 1924 and 1935. Then a gradual decline in their activities was observed. Again in 1951 it became active and committed 6 major crimes. According to Table 28 this gang had a total of 75 registered members of whom 45 were active till the time of the investigation in 1953. There are 9 members in this gang who do not belong to the Lodha community.

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[1] Bad Livelihood (B.L.) Cases come under the section of Cr. P. C. 109(b) & 110.

Bhalkisol Gang

This is a Lodha-constituted gang. It has a wide area of operation covering Narayangarh, Sankrail, Egra, Gopiballavpur, Kesiari, Contai, and Khargpur Police Stations. This gang was first brought within the scope of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1915, though the leader Baikuntha Ahari of Brahmani under the Police Station of Narayangarh was convicted in 2 cases of dacoity much earlier in 1909 (Khargpur Local P. S.) and sentenced to 8 years' R. I. After his release he was untraced for a long time and during this period he organised a gang at Bhalkisol under the Police Station of Sankrail. They had a new way of operation. According to the Police Report, 'They impersonated the Police Officers and *Chowkidārs* (village watchmen) and entered houses by forcibly opening their doors. Sometimes they broke them open with a *Dhenki* (husking lever) if the inmates refused to carry out their command.'

However, this gang committed altogether 77 dacoities, 18 robberies, 16 burglaries, 14 thefts, for which several gang members were later apprehended and convicted at different times for 14 cases of dacoity, 4 cases of robbery, 9 cases of burglary, 13 cases of theft and 37 cases of other specific charges like bad livelihood [C. T. Act 22/2 (b)] and similar other offences. The gang committed 10 criminal offences in 1924 after which it was found to be less active for a few years, and again in 1935 it resumed its activities and committed 11 criminal acts. Then there was a brief suspension of their activities till 1940 when they again committed 17 criminal offences. In 1943 they further committed about 22 criminal offences of a serious nature. The total number of members enrolled in this gang upto 31st December, 1953 was 137 of whom 107 were active and 26 belonged to other non-Lodha communities. This gang is still active in this area.

Criminals

To have a personal interview with the Lodha criminals and their statements recorded, a schedule was prepared with a number of questions covering a variety of possible causes which provoked one to commit a crime and later to turn into a confirmed criminal. Later the criminals included in the schedule were interviewed and asked many relevant questions at their own residence. The total number of active criminals was found to be 180, of whom 95 belonged to Jhargram Sub-division and 85 to Sadar Sub-division of Midnapur. The total number of offences committed by them as also particulars relating to their literacy, economic condition, family size, drinking habit, age at the time of commission of the first crime, etc. were recorded. The criminals have been arranged into 4 categories in Table 29 according to the number of offences committed by them.

TABLE 29

CRIMINAL CHARACTERISTICS

Criminals	No. of offences committed	Percentage	Land holding			Family size			
			Nil	1 acre or less	2 acres or more	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-up
94	1-2	52·2	74	13	7	9	42	32	11
52	3-5	28·8	43	8	1	5	28	14	5
11	6-8	6·1	10	—	1	—	5	4	2
23	9-up	12·7	21	1	1	3	9	6	5
Total: 180			148	22	10	17	84	56	23
Percentage			82·2	12·2	5·5	9·4	46·6	31·1	12·7

Out of 180 persons listed as criminals, 148 (82. 2%) have no landed property at all. 22 (12. 2%) persons have got one acre or less of land of their own most of which are fallow, high and with undulated patches and 10 (5. 5%) persons have 2 acres or more of land. Again, out of 180 persons, 17 (9. 4%) persons are of small-sized family group, 84 (46. 6%) and 56 (31. 1%) persons are of medium- to large-sized family group and 23 (12. 7%) persons are of very large-sized family group.

All of them are illiterate and addicted to drinking.

Table 30 is a record of the age of the criminals on the day of their first commission of crime and arrest on suspicion.

It will be seen from Table 30 that a few people were suspected even at the early age of 15 years and again at an advanced age of 50 years. The majority of the criminals, ranging from the age of 18 to 28, were traced out and rounded up, the latter category being more numerous. Out of 180 criminals, 1 woman named Mini of Jamboni Police Station was arrested and convicted. She was a widow and she had to maintain four children. Another girl of tender age (10 years) named Kanki was also arrested for theft of a small brass cup from a wayside house at Jhargram in 1953. She was released subsequently as she confessed that she was starving for two days and was tempted to lift the brass cup with a view to selling it in the market for a little cash by which she could procure some food to eat.

It will be observed from Table 29 that most of the Lodha criminals have the lowest economic status, that is, they have no property or land at all for bare maintenance. It has been further observed that almost all of them are married and have to maintain families of various sizes. Probably this unstable economic condition is the main motivating cause for the generation of criminal habits among them. But the general criminal propensities of the Lodhas cannot be explained away by economic condition alone, because there are a few other communities like the Santals, the Mundas, the Koras, the Mahatos,

TABLE 30

AGE AT FIRST COMMISSION OF CRIME AND ARREST

Age	No. of criminals	Age	No. of criminals
15	2	33	3
16	2	34	9
17	3	35	4
18	4	36	6
19	8	37	4
20	7	38	5
21	11	39	4
22	13	40	5
23	9	41	2
24	16	42	1
25	7	43	1
26	7	44	1
27	12	45	2
28	20	46	1
29	3	47	—
30	2	48	—
31	1	49	—
32	4	50	1
Total:	131	Total:	49

Grand Total: 131+30=180

etc. living as their close neighbours and practically in the same economic condition; yet a major or representative section of these tribes do not indulge in such anti-social activities which would justify dubbing them as criminals. So certain other factors that may provoke commission of crimes have been discussed here as a general hypothesis.

The Lodhas are predominantly a food-gathering community, though a section of them have taken to agriculture quite recently. The forests in which the Lodhas live have been almost denuded by some agricultural communities for cultivation. The Lodhas being ignorant of agricultural operations had, under sudden circumstantial change, to cling to their outmoded forest economy of collection of jungle produce and hunting and trapping of animals and games. The jungle gradually grew thinner and insufficient for the needs of a growing population. Probably faced by such a situation they developed anti-social habits.

Criminals also take an advantage of the coverage offered by the forests for absconding or for implementing their criminal plans. It was also difficult for the Police to detect a criminal hiding in a forest, Thus anti-social activities continued to spread among them. As the forests became private property later on, various restrictions were imposed by the owners to control entry into them and on the utilisation of the forest produce by unauthorised people. Thus the Lodhas were treated as criminals if they violated these general restrictions, and when a man was discovered felling a tree or collecting firewood without authority, a complaint was lodged with the Police for conviction.

The younger generation of the Lodhas has been brought up under the stress of such circumstances in a vicious circle of criminality. As a result, criminal propensities have been perpetuated among them. No attempt was made by social workers to inspire them to an honest alternative means of livelihood.

Again, an important Notification in which the Lodhas, on their first conviction for a non-bailable offence were treated as registered members under the Criminal Tribes Act, was issued, and this had a very harmful effect upon their destiny. A large number of cases for commission of such offences were lodged with the Police who found them guilty almost without exception on the strength of so-called evidence. Consequently, most of them were registered as members of a criminal tribe and put under surveillance.

Some of the Lodha criminals had the experience of jail life which brought them into contact with a good number of notorious persons. This contact probably rendered a few Lodhas incorrigible or habitual criminals. A few persons of other castes and communities who acted as receivers of stolen properties also directly contributed towards fostering criminal habits among the Lodhas.

Commission of crime has no sanction in the social life of the Lodhas. Neither have they any rites and ceremonies which have even the least connection with criminal life. There is no prescribed purification ceremony to be observed after commission of a crime. But it has been observed at the time of investigation that none would like to have social relations with a criminal.

However, the basic causes of crime of the Lodhas still persist. The economically displaced Lodhas could not adapt themselves to the changing situations which further drove them towards a precarious existence and the growing needs of an expanding family clamped in a small territory could not be met with a hewer's income. Enduring frustration and lack of self-reliance brought in its train a perpetual stagnation in their collective life and subsequently turned them into inveterate criminals with every knock of waves of changing circumstances.

CHAPTER XI

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The cultural pattern of the life of the Lodhas has already been described in different chapters of this volume. It has been observed that there is considerable divergence in the manners, customs as well as the economic activities of these people. These variations are due to different factors like changes in the historical or political conditions of the country pronounced in varied geo-ecological settings. Sometimes the neighbouring 'clean' caste communities influenced the socio-economic and cultural life of the Lodhas by the immediate appeal of their superior culture. All these factors jointly brought about great changes in the life of the people of this area; the Lodhas also responded to these in varying degrees. In a dynamic society, change is a continuous process in which shaping and reshaping of the material, social and cultural life, with frequent adjustments and readjustments, are a natural phenomena.

In the absence of sufficient supporting data it is very difficult to build up a systematic past history of these people. Yet it may be said that they were predominantly forest dwellers and had a forest economy. Sometimes they had to exploit the forest produce for consumption as food and exchange these with other neighbouring communities to secure the necessities of life. Thus a slow but continuous contact with the neighbouring progressive communities was maintained all along.

Owing, however, to changes in the political situation in course of time, the forest home of the Lodhas passed on to the hands of the British rulers who subsequently transferred its ownership to some intermediaries on a permanent rental basis for the convenience of administration. These new

Zemindars realised higher rent from the occupiers; started to deforest the jungle and implanted a few agricultural communities there. The Lodhas, who were averse to agricultural pursuits, retreated into the interior of the forest and struggled helplessly to eke out their existence. Gradually they became homeless and lost their traditional means of livelihood. Collection of fuel and other minor forest produce was, however, continued in a very restricted and illegal manner adding more difficulties to their life. Though in the eastern part of the Lodha territory, some of them have taken to agriculture of late and serve as hired agricultural labour, the majority stuck to their original practices.

This economic and territorial displacement under a new setting with the impact of scheming communities all around, affected very seriously their old patterns of economic life and ultimately upset the equilibrium of the whole society. Probably under such circumstances, pilfering, petty theft, lifting of articles from the houses of the neighbours and clandestine sale of the jungle produce were first resorted to on an individual basis. These individual practices gradually crystallised into a group habit. Amidst poverty, unsympathetic attitude of the neighbours, and stoic apathy of the then ruling Government, criminality cut a deep gorge in which the people had to roll down helplessly.

The Lodhas were considered as *Savaras*, a mythical forest-dwelling community of legendary repute. These mythical Savaras had an easy access to the Hindu society as are borne out by Hindu epic literature depicting the exploits of the Savaras. Thus, with the passage of time, the influence of the epic literature made the Lodhas (who assert themselves as Savaras) consider themselves as a part and parcel of the greater Hindu community. Though they had no prescribed occupation according to the division of labour in orthodox Hindu society, yet they enjoyed the services of the *Dhobā* or washerman, *Nāpit* or barber, but not that of the Brahmans.

These services, however, are still denied to some of the Scheduled castes. There are other changes in the Lodha society brought about by continuous contact with the Hindus. Later, Vaishnava influence infiltrated into this part of the district and the Lodhas were to some extent influenced by it. As the people were illiterate and poor, this sort of feeble contact probably led them to follow a different course of living. As a result of all this, they have assimilated confused Hinduised ideas with their tribal animistic ones as the basis. They had their own priests, own method of propitiation of some of the major Hindu deities even, which did not conflict with their older pattern. This is also observed among them in respect of the concept and treatment of diseases where tribal, Hinduised and modern scientific ideas and treatments are resorted to either singly or in combination. It rather gave them double benefit with the least conflict with their traditional ideas in respect of the supernatural world.

The Lodhas have been neglected by the civilised world for centuries together. They were branded as inveterate criminals and segregated from the rest of their neighbours. Fortunately, however, recently the Government of India, after the attainment of independence, have realised the baneful effect of this policy and have revoked the Criminal Tribes Act. The State Government, jointly with the Central Government, are now trying to rehabilitate these people. Fortunately, in many areas, the Lodhas are responding splendidly to this programme of rehabilitation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

UPLIFTMENT PROGRAMMES: PRESENT AND FUTURE

A society without a stable economy usually disintegrates, particularly if it is backward in other aspects, as in the case of the Lodhas. It is a fact that for their exclusiveness and isolated ways of living for ages in the past, and the stigma of criminality implanted on them, they are looked upon with contempt and suspicion and an unsympathetic bias by the neighbouring communities, and as a result, they do not get proper guidance and stimulus from others. They have no idea of the means of countering or shaping the economic forces to their adventage; nor could they keep pace with the march of time and changes. Consequently, they have remained pent up in the pool of primitive economy of food-gathering and hunting, and have very little knowledge of agricultural practices as yet, while their neighbours have marched continuously ahead and achieved more prosperous conditions.

Amongst the Lodhas, very few even have land of their own, while all others have nothing at all, nor have any stable source of income. Selling of forest produce like roots and tubers, which wildly grow in this area, and faggots, snake-skin, honey, and leaves of *Sāl* and *Kend* trees, etc., collecting these illegally from the Reserve Forests, and working as day labourers, or agricultural labourers on the land of others, are their main sources of income now. They remain unemployed for about 8 months in a year. Naturally, they are famished and can hardly have two square meals a day, which is the minimum for bare subsistence. In short, they are now a degenerating community, who need immediate reclamation from this decaying trend.

No attempt was ever been made in the past for the rehabilitation of these socially and economically backward and displaced people, before attainment of independence by India. Some years later when the Criminal Tribes Act was repealed in 1952, the Central and the State Governments gave some thought towards ameliorating the wretched conditions of these people, and decided to attempt rehabilitation of a few selected Lodha families in the district of Midnapur only. Besides the Lodhas, there are Kherias also, who are one of the denotified communities, whose concentration is more in Bankura and Purulia districts. Prior to denotification, the Lodhas were under the administrative control of the Home (Police) Dept. Their rehabilitation work was accelerated after transfer of this charge to the State Tribal Welfare Dept., some time back.

This humble beginning of the rehabilitation work was made in a very modest way without sufficient funds, and without making any scientific assessment of the problems and needs of the Lodha life. To help its proper implementation, the Harijan Sevak Sangha, Bengal Branch, drew up a plan and submitted a proposal to the then District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police and Special Officer for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, to carry out upliftment work among the Lodhas of Auligeria, in Jhargram P. S., and the Officials considered this proposal quite feasible and began its implementation.

To start with, only 26 families were selected, and for them land was purchased. They were given facilities and implements for cultivation and also the necessary livestock. Separate huts for each family were constructed, and roads and wells were laid to provide for communication and irrigation facilities.

Surprisingly enough, quite a few of the criminal Lodhas, so rehabilitated, responded very encouragingly to this change. Next year, a few more families were settled there, and more money was placed at the disposal of the Harijan Sevak Sangha to spend for this upliftment work. But unfortunately, after two years, the scheme proved to be an expensive failure. Some of the occupiers of the colony were put into jail, being arrested for commission of crimes. When the causes of this failure were assessed by the administrators and anthropologists, it was found that the socio-cultural and psychological aspects of the people had been completely overlooked by the workers-in-charge. The unrealistic approach to the problems of a forest-dwelling tribe, who had very little experience of agrarian life, overlooking their socio-economic and cultural needs, was an utterly wrong approach. Secondly, they had lived in complete isolation for long enough, and as a result, became a static community, shy of renovations.[1]

But the results were completely different in the following two cases. A social worker, Sri P. C. Midya, had been working for more than a decade among the Lodhas of Kukai, in Kesiari P. S. The Lodhas of Kukai were different in their mental get-up from the Lodhas of the jungle areas of Jhargram. The District Magistrate concerned sanctioned Rs. 21,000/- for the Lodhas of this village, to be spent on specific upliftment works like purchase of land, house building, purchase of bullocks and goats, etc. Some of the Lodhas of this village have a few acres of land, and when these additional facilities were made available to them, they took the advantage fully, and had a marked change for the better. In this work, Sri Midya took the valuable suggestions of Prof. N. K. Bose, and Sri Panchanan Bose, who are reputed social workers, and thus was able to make a scientific approach towards the solution of these problems. He started a Social Centre with the co-operation of the author of this book and Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. It is helping the people of this village to gradually reshape their economic and cultural life, which have been discussed in some details in the present volume. This scheme is a promising one, opined Mr. Gupta, Deputy .Inspector General of Police. 'The success of the work will be apparent to any visitor, as soon as he enters the village. There are tanks abounding in fish, fields full of grains all around, and clean homesteads with cheerful people living in them'.

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[1] Gupta, R, 'Lodhas Revisited'. *Man-in-India*, Vol. 59 No. 3, 1959.

During the Second Plan Period, another Experimental Lodha Colony was set up at Dholkat, in Jhargram P. S. This was sponsored by the Bharat Sevasharam Sangha. Rs. 30,000/- was spent for rehabilitation of 20 families only. Huts, land, poultry, etc. have all been provided for the Lodhas. Training in crafts like carpentry has been arranged at the main centre of the Sangha where a few Lodha young men had been getting comprehensive training. But the Lodhas in general find some difficulties in adjusting their daily normal life to this new spurt of occupational changes. No arrangement has been made to re-organise their socio-cultural life, nor any detailed investigation has been made in this respect as yet to achieve integration. Thus it may be said that some vital aspects of the Lodha life have been ignored, and the scheme itself requires some amendments for its proper implementation.[2]

During 1959-60, the Government of West Bengal made further arrangements to rehabilitate a few more Lodha families in Midnapur. The Samaj Sevak Sangha, organised by a few young Professors of this district, including the writer, was approached by the Government for co-operation in this work. With this object in view, a Lodha Colony has been started at Daharpur, in Narayangarh P. S. For the organisational set-up three Govt. Officials were included in its Rehabilitation Sub-Committee. Unlike the previous schemes, the rehabilitation aspects it will cover are more numerous and comprehensive, which will be implemented in different phases. Land purchase, making available agricultural facilities, offering better wages, supplying bullocks, seeds, manures, improved implements, developing cottage industries, etc.,

[2] Sarkar R. M, *Panoramic review of the Lodha Rehabilition Schemes in Midnapur*—Seminar of Denotified Tribes Federation, Delhi 1963.

are some of the important features of this scheme. The scheme was that at the very beginning the Society would start working only with one social worker. Later, a Co-operative Multipurpose Society would be organised, and work in close liaison with the Samaj Sevak Sangha, the latter functioning as a care-taker institution. A Community Hut was set up, where grown-up young boys stay at night, making some products of handicrafts, or taking advantage of adult education which is imparted there. Besides, a radio set has been installed and kits for indoor games have been provided for at this centre for recreational purposes. The organisers have remodelled and repaired a few old huts and built a few new ones side by side to meet the requirements. The land was distributed on famity basis, according to the number of members, their age and sex. A few acres of land were also cultivated on co-operative basis, and from its income, expenses for general development plans are being met even though the Government has agreed to grant further funds that may be required for this work. A total of Rs. 58,500/- was spent for 39 families covered so far. Later, the Samaj Sevak Sangha planned for an integrated development scheme, organising a Co-operative Society with members from the locality, considering the nature of the problems of other neighbouring communities in general. The Government of West Bengal felt interested in this scheme, and sanctioned necessary funds for establishment of a Grain *Golā*, from which the local people as well as the Lodhas will get paddy seeds during the cultivation season. Besides, a few Cottage Industry Schemes, including mat-making, spinning and weaving, and tailoring, etc, have been introduced. These were taken up with a view to meeting the needs of the local people in improving their social and economic life. Here the trainees usually work at their leisure time. The District Officers, and the Officers of the Tribal Welfare Dept. have all appreciated this change for the better in the life of the people. This year (1963) this Organisation is trying to set up one Junior Basic School with Ashram facilities (residential facilities) for the Lodhas. A pumping set has been installed for irrigational purposes. A cycle rickshaw has been purchased for meeting the communication needs of this centre.

There is a Model Farm and a Poultry owned by the community in general. This has been organised with a view to setting up a cheap store for supplying various articles of food to the neighbouring communities on cash or sometimes in exchange of their surplus domestic products.

During 1962-63, another rehabilitation scheme, sponsored by the Government of India, was introduced, covering 35 Lodha families of Dhansola, in Binpur P. S. Jhargram Sub-division, at a cost of Rs. 70,000/-. Some time ago, in this particular village, a riot took place between the Lodhas and the Mahatos necessitating relief for these communities. The scheme, intended to do so, has already been put into effect, and is being implemented by the Samaj Sevak Sangha, entrusted with the work by the Government.

A Seminar was held in April 1963 at Delhi, organised by the Denotified (Ex-Criminal) Tribes Federation, which was inaugurated by Sri Jawaharlal Nehru. Prime Minister of India, and presided over by Hon'ble Home Minister, Sri Lal Bahadur Sastri. Many distinguished persons from various States and many representatives of the denotified communities attended this seminar. The writer also attended it and spoke on some of the vital problems of the Lodhas. Details of his theme have already been published in the Bulletin of the Seminar. Some well-conceived resolutions were adopted in this Seminar and the authorities were approached to co-operate in their implementation.

Now the Tribal Welfare Department of the Government of West Bengal has been showing much interest in the general improvement of the Lodhas, and contemplating starting a few Forest Cooperatives to assist this forest-dwelling community.

It is also intended to start a training-*cum*-production centre for Tusser production at Nayagram where most of the Lodhas depend on tusser rearing. If this scheme is taken up, the Lodhas in general will be able to get more facilities for economic betterment, and the natural resources will be utilised for the overall development of this community.

The Government can also start a few Grain *Golās* here on a co-operative basis. If this is done, the people will be freed from the clutches of the middlemen, who exploit them by offering loans in the agricultural season at a high rate of interest.

The Police Officers of this locality are now helping the social workers to solve various problems of the Lodhas. This is undoubtedly a good sign, and we expect that some day this community will be able to stand on their own legs without any forebodings, with heads up, and robust shoulders, side by side with other neighbouring communities, and will be able to bear the burden of an overall development of the country.

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3 Bhowmick, P. K., 1963: *An approach to rehabilitation of the Tribals.* Seminar of Denotified Tribes Federation, Delhi 1963.

APPENDIX II

ABSTRACTS FROM LAW BOOKS AS APPLIED TO LODHA CRIMINALS

The Indian Penal Code

Sec. 176 Whoever, being legally bound to give any notice or to furnish information on any subject to any public servant, as such, intentionally *omits to give such notice or to furnish such information* in the manner and at the time required by law, shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month, or with fine which may extend to five hundred rupees, or with both; or, if the notice or information required to be given respects the commission of an offence, or is required for the purpose of preventing the commission of an offence, or in order to the apprehension of an offender, with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both; or, if the notice or information required to be given is required by an order passed under sub-section (1) of section 565 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both. (*Italics are ours*)

Sec. 302 Whoever commits murder shall be punished with death, or transportation for life, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec, 304 Whoever commits culpable homicide not amounting to murder, shall be punished with transportation for life, or imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine, if the act by which the death is caused is done with the intention of causing death, or of causing such bodily injury as is likely to cause death; or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, or with fine or with both, if the act is done with the knowledge that it is likely to cause death, but without any intention to cause death or to cause such bodily injury as is likely to cause death.

Sec. 379 Whoever commits theft shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

Sec. 380 Whoever commits theft in any building, tent or vessel, which building, tent or vessel is used as human dwelling, or used for the custody of property, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 392 Whoever commits robbery shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine; and, if the robbery be committed on the highway between sunset and sunrise, the imprisonment may be extended to fourteen years.

Sec. 393 Whoever attempts to commit robbery shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 394 If any person, in committing or in attempting to commit robbery, voluntarily causes hurt, such person, and any other person jointly concerned in committing or attempting to commit such robbery, shall be punished with transportation for life, or with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 395 Whoever commits dacoity shall be punished with transportation for life, or with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten years and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 396 If any one of five or more persons, who are conjointly committing dacoity commits murder in so committing dacoity, every one of those persons shall be punished with death, or transportation for life, or rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 397 If, at any time of committing robbery or dacoity, the offender uses any deadly weapon, or causes grievous hurt to any person, or attempts to cause death or grievous hurt to any person, the imprisonment with which such offender shall be punished shall not be less than seven years.

See. 398 If, at the time of attempting to commit robbery or dacoity, the offender is armed with any deadly weapon, the imprisonment with which such offender shall be punished shall not be less than seven years.

Sec. 399 Whoever makes any preparation for committing dacoity, shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 400 Whoever, at any time after the passing of this Act, shall belong to a gang of persons associated for the purpose of habitually committing dacoity, shall be punished with transportation for life, or with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 435 Whoever commits mischief by fire or any explosive substance, intending to cause, or knowing it to be likely that he will thereby cause, damage to any property to the amount of one hundred rupees or upwards or (whereby the property is agriculture produce) ten rupees or upwards, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 436 Whoever commits mischief by fire or any explosive substance intending to cause, or knowing it to be likely that he will thereby cause, the destruction of any building which is ordinarily used as a place of worship or as a human dwelling or as a place for the custody of property, shall be punished with transportation for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 457 Whoever commits lurking house-trespass by night, or house-breaking by night, in order to the committing of any offence punishable with imprisonment, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, and shall also be liable to fine; and, if the offence intended to be committed is theft, the term of the imprisonment may be extended to fourteen years.

Sec. 458 Whoever commits lurking house-trespass by night, or house-breaking by night, having made preparation for causing hurt to any person, or for assaulting any person, or for wrongfully restraining any person, or for putting any person in fear in hurt, or of assault, or of wrongful restraint, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to fourteen years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 459 Whoever, whilst committing lurking house-trespass or house-breaking, causes grievous hurt to any person or attempts to cause death or grievous hurt to any person, shall be punished with transportation for life, or imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Sec. 461 Whoever dishonestly or with intent to commit mischief, breaks open or unfastens any closed receptacle which contains or which he believes to contain property, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

The Criminal Procedure Code

Sec. 109 Whenever a Presidency Magistrate, District Magistrate, Sub-divisional Magistrate, or Magistrate of the First Class receives information—

a) that any person is taking precautions to conceal his presence within the local limits of such Magistrate's jurisdiction, and that there is reason to believe that such person is taking such precautions with a view to committing any offence, or

b) that there is within such limits a person who has no ostensible means of subsistence, or who cannot give a satisfactory account of himself,

such Magistrate may, in manner hereinafter provided, require such person to show cause why he should not be ordered to execute a bond, with sureties, for his good behaviour for such period, not exceeding one year, as the Magistrate thinks fit to fix.

Sec. 110 Whenever a Presidency Magistrate, District Magistrate, or Sub-divisional Magistrate or a Magistrate of the Fisrt Class specially empowered in this behalf by the State Government receives information that any persons within the local limits of his jurisdiction—

a) is by habit a robber, house breaker, thief, or forger, or

b) is by habit a receiver of stolen property knowing the same to have been stolen, or

c) habitually protects or harbours thieves or aids, in the concealment or disposal of stolen property, or

d) habitually commits, or attempts to commit, or abets the commission of, the offence of kidnapping, abduction, extortion, cheating or mischief, or any offence punishable under Chapter XII of the Indian Penal Code, or under section 489-A, section 498-B, section 489-C, or section 489-D of that Code, or

(e) habitually commits, or attempts to commit, or abets the commission of, offences involving a breach of the peace, or

(f) is so desperate and dangerous as to render his being at large without security hazardous to the community,

such Magistrate may, in manner hereinafter provided, require such person to show cause why he should not be ordered to execute a bond, with sureties, for his good behaviour for such period, not exceeding three years, as the Magistrate thinks fit to fix.

APPENDIX III

ABSTRACTS FROM CRIMINAL TRIBES ACT, ACT NO. VI OF 1924

22 (1) Whoever, being a registered member of a criminal tribe, contravenes a rule made under clause (e), clause (g) or clause (h) of section 20 shāll be pnnishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend,--

(a) on a first conviction, to one yeār,

(b) on a second conviction, to two years, and

(c) on any subsequent conviction, to three years, or with fine which may extend to five hundred rupees, or with both.

(2) Whoever, being a registered member of criminal tribe, contravenes any other rule made under section 20 shall be punishable,—

(a) on a first convinction. with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees, or with both ; and

(b) on any subsequent conviction, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to five hundred rupees, or with both.

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APPENDIX V

A GLOSSARY OF THE LOCAL TERMS

Agni Veer—Fire eater Hero
Āhār Veer—Food hunter Hero
Ākhrā—a raised platform
Āmloki—A kind of tree (phyllanthus emblica)
Amābasyā—New moon.
Ārati—The offering of sacred lamps to the gods and goddesses.
Āsan—A kind of tree (Terminalia tomentosa)
Asāri thākur—The God of Asār month (June-July)
Ātghariā—the village massenger
Ātmā—Soul.
Ātmangala—the eighth-day ceremony during marriage festival.
Āns dubān—immersion of the first-rice-ball during the funeral ceremony.

Bara—Superior
Barām—A tutelary deity of the village.
Bāghoā—a fearful spirit.
Bāndanā—cattle caressing ceremony.
Bāromāsi gān—songs of the Twelve-month cycle.
Bainchā—chickenpox.
Baithak khānā—Drawing room.
Bargā chās—share cropping cultivation
Bāndhāpan—a presentation to the couple during marriage ceremony.
Bāsi bibāha—After-marriage rites
Bāsumātā—mother-earth.
Bātgherā—a custom of blocking the way of entrance during marriage ceremony.

Beharis—Inhabitants of Behar province.
Bedi—an earthen platform or alter.
Bengali bābu—Bengali gentleman
Bhagawān—the supreme God.
Bhairabi—the name of Chandi
Bhāsur—husband's elder brother
Bhelwā—a kind of tree (semicarpus anacardium)
Bhog—a sacred offering to the deity
Bhut—a ghost.
Bhoodan—a land-gifting movement sponsored by Vinoba Bhabe.
Bibāha—an orthodox type of marriage.
Bidhi—the system of tieing a mango leaf, a betel-nut and a betel leaf round the wrists of the bride and the bride-groom.
Byakrā—a shaman or spirit-possessed man.
Bund—an artificial reservoir of water.

Chābāki—a red thread for tieing round the waist.
Chādars—a piece of cloth for covering the upper part of the body.
Chākatalā—the shrine of Barām at Ma-Mansa.
Chāltā phuliā—a type of fatal pox which resembles chāltā (Dillenia indica) fruit.
Chaitra-sankrānti—the last day of the month of Chaitra (March-April).
Chāngal—a kind of circular cross-drum covered on one side by means of hide.
Chandā māchh—A kind of fish (Ambassisis ranga).
Chandmālā—a decorated coloured necklace made of paper.
Chalanta Veer—the wandering hero.
Chelās—the apprentices who take lessons in magical and other fields.
Chhāmrā—a temporary shed.
Chharidār—assistant to the village priest.
Chhota—inferior.

Chirkā alu—a kind of yam available in the local jungle.
Chirguni—a dargerous ghost of a woman who died during child birth.
Chowkidār—village watchman.
Chotta Veer—the inferior hero.
Chuār—outlandish fellow
Chumāi—kissing.

Dālā—branch of a tree.
Dāhis—midwives.
Dāinis—witches.
Dāini Veer—the witch heroine.
Dandapāt—an official in charge for peace and order.
Dākuās—village massengers.
Darwāns—gate keeper.
Desh—inhabitants of the country.
Deheri—village priest.
Dhemnā—a kind of snake.
Dharmadevatā—God of Righteousness.
Dhānsarāna—a ceremony of removing the paddy during marriage custom.
Dhenki—husking lever.
Dhobā—washerman.
Dhulā—dust.
Durbā—a kind of grass (cynoden dactylon)
Durgā astami—worship of goddess Durga on eigth day after newmoon.

Ekusiā—the twenty-first day from the date of child-birth.
Ekir-Mikir—a kind of game of the children

Gāi—a kind of present containing ten betel-nuts and ten betel-leaves.
Garām—a tutelary deity of the village.
Gamcha—napkins.
Ghar jāmāi—a resident son-in-law.
Ghee hānri—burning of the clarified butter during ceremony.

Ghunsi—a type of red cord that is tied round the waist.
Grām mānya—royalty paid to the village council.
Gomuā—a spirit.
Gur—malasses.
Guruputā—cooking for the persons who take the bier to the burial ground.
Gunins—medicinemen.

Hālmā—a sharp-edged weapon used for sacrificing animals,
Hānriā—Ricebeer.
Hānripariā—a place for disposing of unclean pots.
Hānri khāuki—one who stealthily eats from the cooking pot.
Hānri Pujā—worship of new pots.
Hanumān Veer—the son of wind God.
Hantakār—official sacrificer.
Haribol—a form of invocation to Lord Hari.
Hitāl Chandi—the custom of throwing potatoes and brinjals towards the bridegroom during marriage ceremony.
Homa—a ceremony in which clarified butter is burnt in a sacred fire with incantations.

Isān—a raised earthen platform.

Jāliā—fisherman
Jāmāi phirtā—return of the Son-in-law.
Jānti—betel-nut cutter.
Jakshiā—a water spirit.
Jankā—a water spirit
Jatrā gān—Songs sung at open theatrical performance.
Jhumur—a kind of song sung during stick dance.
Joy chandi—Chandi of victory.

Kādā Basanta—a type of small pox.
Kānd kātuā—men who help in the funeral services.
Kālpurus—a fearful spirit

Kalki—earthen pipe for smoking tobacco.

Kānfuk—the system of blowing of wind with charms into the ears of the diseased person—a magical rite.

Kādā Khelā—a custom of playing with mud ball during marriage ceremony,

Kānsāris—a caste practisding bell-metal work.

Kaivartas—fisherman caste.

Kane Sāri—a piece of cloth for the bride.

Kāndār—a screen held between the couple by the villagers during marriage ceremony.

Kānkul—a kind of thorny plant (Caparis horide)

Kāth—a water spirit

Kāthā—a grain measure.

Kānāmāchi—Blindman's buff or playing the blind fly.

Khāru—iron bangle.

Khāru Parāno—Wearing of the iron bangle by the bridegroom.

Khapra—wide-mouthed earthen pot.

Khechungā veer—convulsion hero.

Khir—a kind of gruel prepared with rice, sugar and milk.

Khonta—a spade,

Khuli—a cup like earthen container.

Khuli jogān—Daily offering of food for the dead during the mourning period.

Kotāl—an assistant to the king.

Kshur hānri—a pot for shaving during funeral ceremony.

Kulimāther—reception in marriage ceremony.

Kundrā—a mischievious spirit.

Lagan—time of marriage.

Lodh tree—a kind of tree comnonly found in Northern India.

Lohā goriā—a fatal type of small pox.

Lakshmi—the goddess of wealth.

Lāyek—country soldier.

Lukochuri khelā—playing hide and seek.

Mā sāri—a piece of cloth for the bride's mother.
Mādal—a musical instrument.
Mahuā—A kind of tree found in jungle areas. The scientific name is Madhukā latifolia.
Makar—a kind of shark.
Makar sankrānti—the last day of the month of Pous (December-January)
Mangal din—an auspicious day.
Mangal ghat—an auspicious vessel.
Mālā—a wooden bead necklace.
Mānsiks—vow to the gods.
Mānkarā—custom of bridegroom's refraining from his gruel for some gifts from the bride's parents.
Māro—the residing place of the deities.
Māroā—temporary shed erected in the courtyard of the bride's house.
Milmilā—measles.
Mukhiā—headman.
Mukhiā mānya—royalty for the honour of the Mukhia.
Mukh kholā—mouth opener.
Mukh Sādhan mantra—chant for opening the mouth.
Muri—fried rice.

Nāpit—Barbar a caste.
Nāyāk—Leader
Natan hānri—initiātion of new pots.

Ojhās—medicinemen.
Olāuthā—Asiatic cholera.

Pāik—country soldier.
Pāikan land—rentfree land.
Pāllā—a turban
Pāramānik—a village cook for the ceremonies.
Paban Veer—the Wind God.

Phul dekhāna – the custom of showing of the flower during marriage ceremony.
Piasal—a kind of tree (Plerocarpus marsupium)
Pretāsani—a spirit
Pret hānri—cooking pot which is connected with the departed spirit.
Pukur—tank
Punarbibaha—re-marriage.

Ramkalāi—bean
Rākhāli bau—kept wife.

Sābāi—a kind of grass (Ichamum angustfolium)
Sajlatā—the day of child birth.
Sajinā—a kind of tree (Morninga pterygosperma)
Sāl—a kind of tree (Shorea robusta)
Sāl fish—a kind of fish (ophicephalus morulius)
Sālā dhuti—a piece of cloth for bride's brother presented during a marriage ceremony.
Sambar—the chief conductor of the marriage ceremony.
Sān—a kind of grass hopper.
Sāngā—widow re-marriage.
Sāngāli bau—the wife of sāngā marriage.
Sāntijal—holy water.
Sarga—heaven.
Ser—grain measure
Sevakendra—Social service centre.
Swadeshi movement—the movement for the freedom of the country.

Tālkāti—a kind of game of the children.
Taliā—assistant to the village priest.
Tāntis—Weaver caste.
Tangis—axes.
Telpānjā – oil divination.
Thān—the residing place of a deity.

Tulsi—a kind of holy plant (oscimum bacilicum)
Tulsi manch—a mound of earth for the tulasi plant.
Tusu—a doll worship held in the month of Pous (December) January).

Ubur Dubur—a kind of game of the children.

Vishwavasu—the mythical Savara Chief.
Veer—heroes.
Vara veer—superior hero.

Yugini—a dreadful spirit.
Yajna—a ceremony in which clarified butter is burnt in a sacred fire with incantations.

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